

ANALYSIS AND LESSONS FROM GENERAL GÁLVEZ'S  
WEST FLORIDA CAMPAIGN DURING THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR

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General Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

ANALYSIS AND LESSONS FROM GENERAL GÁLVEZ'S WEST FLORIDA CAMPAIGN DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR by MAJ Ernesto Pérez, 106 pages.

The American Revolutionary War was a global war in which the main European powers were involved. Spain played a relevant role in the war, which has not always been recognized or properly studied. General Bernardo de Gálvez was the Spanish governor of Louisiana. He conducted the campaign along the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico to regain West Florida for Spain, and to protect the southern flank of the American Revolution. Recently, he has been recognized as the eighth honorary citizen of the United States of America.

My research presents a historical narrative of the campaign. It analyzes the campaign from a professional military perspective and focuses on the challenges and the methods employed to overcome them. My aim is to deduce the lessons that can be learned from the campaign which have enduring value to practitioners of military art and science. Gálvez faced a difficult command and control structure, scarcity of forces, and others challenges related to the operational environment (terrain, weather, diseases, etc.). The analysis strongly suggest that superior leadership, audacity, adaptation, and the application of what may be termed Mission Command philosophy enabled Gálvez to achieve victory.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is based on my attempt to discover the historical facts that enabled General Gálvez to regain West Florida for Spain during the American Revolutionary War. It summarizes the results of many hours of work reading and analyzing these facts. It attempts to identify the most salient ones and to present the most relevant conclusions that may be drawn from them. For this reason I wish to acknowledge all those who helped this thesis come to fruition.

First, I thank my beloved wife, who is always by my side taking the burden of caring for a big family and supporting my military and academic career. Second, I would like to recognize Dr. Hernandez and the rest of my committee, for their professionalism and supportive attitude. A special debt of gratitude must be paid to Don Manuel Olmedo Checa, an important researcher, academic member of the Royal Academy of History in Málaga (Spain) who is recovering the figure of Don Bernardo de Gálvez. His contribution in guiding the author and providing him with references and sources has been key to this research.

My final acknowledgment is dedicated to all those men and women, like Don Bernardo de Gálvez, who dedicate their lives to the service of Spain. For those from the past, who allow us to write their past prowess. For those in the present, serving our society and being examples of our values. And for those in the future, who will continue to ennoble the name of Spain as a great nation. They all have my best acknowledge and respect. VIVA ESPAÑA!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	viii
TABLES .....	ix
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Overview.....	1
Primary Research Question .....	4
Secondary Research Questions .....	4
Limitations .....	4
Delimitations.....	5
Conclusion .....	5
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	6
CHAPTER 3 HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF THE GÁLVEZ CAMPAIGN TO REGAIN WEST FLORIDA .....	10
Framing Gálvez's Campaign in the American Revolutionary War.....	10
Historical Context .....	10
The American Revolution.....	13
Spain and the American Revolution .....	16
Gálvez and his Early Years in Louisiana.....	19
Don Bernardo de Gálvez: A brief Biography .....	19
Louisiana from Ulloa to Gálvez-Clandestine Support to the American Revolution .....	21
The West Florida Military Campaign .....	23
Major Combat Operations in the Mississippi River .....	26
Major Combat Operations in the Gulf of Mexico and Defense of Saint Louis .....	31
The Beginning of the Operations in the Gulf of Mexico .....	31
The Siege of Pensacola .....	40

CHAPTER 4 CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS .....	55
Analysis of the Campaign.....	56
Strategic Level Considerations .....	56
Operational Level.....	58
Operational Environment General Considerations and Operational Design .....	58
Analysis of Forces.....	63
The Operational Approach: Lines of Operations and Decisive Points .....	68
Tactical Considerations.....	71
Analysis of Challenges General Gálvez faced and Methods he Employed to	
Overcome Them .....	72
Strategic Considerations .....	72
Operational Environment Considerations .....	73
Lessons from the Analysis of Forces .....	75
Tactical Considerations.....	79
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS .....	82
Synthesis of the Lessons from Gálvez’s Campaign to Regain West Florida .....	82
Leadership.....	82
Mission Command.....	85
Audacity.....	87
Adaptation.....	88
Recommendations for Application in Future Campaigns.....	90
Foster Audacious Leaders and support their Audacity during Operations .....	90
Adapt the Leader’s Preparation to the Requirements of the	
Operational Environment.....	92
Create a Positive Climate and Open Channels for Open Communication in the	
Chain of Command in order to enable the Application of Mission Command	
Philosophy.....	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	94

## ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. North American Continent in the Beginning of the American Revolutionary War.....	13
Figure 2. Campaign Overview .....	25
Figure 3. The Siege of Pensacola .....	42
Figure 4. Detail of the Concept of Operations for the Siege.....	44
Figure 5. Detail of the Siege of Pensacola .....	49
Figure 6. Lines of Operation in Gálvez's West Florida Campaign.....	69
Figure 7. Decisive Points Location in the North-American Continent .....	71



## TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Friendly Forces Critical Factors Analysis.....	65
Table 2. Enemy Forces Critical Factors Analysis.....	67
Table 3. Decisive Points and their Event—Function Relation during Gálvez’s Campaign to Regain West Florida.....	70

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

On 8 May 2015, in the port of Málaga, Spain, a joint and multinational parade was celebrated in honor of Field Marshall Don Bernardo de Gálvez who expelled the British from Pensacola 258 years ago. Sailors from the US Navy destructor “Mc Faul” were standing side by side with soldiers of the “Tercio Don Juan de Austria” of the Spanish Legion to honor the Spanish governor and military commander who had been recently recognized as the eighth “Honorary Citizen of the United States”, a title also bestowed on Winston Churchill , Mother Teresa, and the Marquis of Lafayette.

— *“Un héroe entre dos banderas”*  
*“Homenaje a Gálvez de la Legión y la Navy en Málaga”*

#### Overview

The American Revolutionary War (1775 to 1783) was a conflict that took place in the north of the American continent and led to the birth of the United States of America. Although the main actors in the conflict were the American colonies trying to gain independence from the British, every world power of that time took part in the conflict. Thus, some historians consider it a global war at the level of the First World War.

At that moment, France and Spain were the two powers in the area that could influence the war against Great Britain. France’s contribution to the American Revolutionary War is well known because they participated actively, openly and always beside the Americans, taking part in some battles with them. Nevertheless, the Spanish contribution is not as recognized for several reasons. First, there was no Spanish-American military treaty of alliance stating a clear Spanish support to the rebels. Despite the lack of a formal alliance, Spain supported the rebellious colonies clandestinely in the beginning and then openly as the war progressed. Second, Spain was looking for her own

interests in recovering the territories lost during the previous conflict—the Seven Year’s War. Third, the British and the Spanish fought mainly in Europe during the war.

Nonetheless, Spanish victories over the British in the Caribbean Sea and in Florida weakened the British and forced them to open a second front in the American continent.

Bernardo de Gálvez was the governor of Spanish Louisiana. He conducted the Spanish campaign to recover Florida for Spain. He was the right man at the right place, and he proved during his campaign that he was a great leader, charismatic, intelligent and audacious. Despite the lack of a formal political agreement between Spain and the rebel colonies, he was able to communicate with them, and find common interests with all the relevant actors in the region. He then formed and led a coalition at the tactical and operational level to achieve the strategic objectives he had received from the Spanish king supporting the American Revolution and the national interests.

Historically, Gálvez has not been popularly recognized until the last decade, when some historians have recovered data from the archives proving his deeds. However, today some historians argue that his name should be recognized at the level of Lafayette because it is not difficult to find evidence to recognize that his campaign was truly relevant to the success of the United States’ struggle for independence. Thus, George Washington wanted him to march beside him -on his right side- during the 4 July triumphal parade.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the American National Park Service web page states about him: “There is a statue to his memory in Washington, DC and a plaque in Natchez, MS.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Marmol, “Bernardo De Gálvez Regresa Al Lado De George Washington,” *Elmundo*, May 9, 2014, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2014/05/09/536cb03eca4741861c8b4580.html>.

Yet, how much different American history might have been without him!”<sup>2</sup> As a final recognition, based on proved historical data, President Barack Obama conferred on him an honorary American citizenship signing a resolution stating that he “was a hero of the Revolutionary War who risked his life for the freedom of the United States’ people and provided supplies, intelligence, and strong military support to the war effort.”<sup>3</sup>

General Bernardo de Gálvez campaign in West Florida was very complex and he had to deal with a great variety of problems. In a similar way, western armies currently have to deal with complex operational environments and execute decisive action guided by a mission command philosophy. As will be shown, a detailed military study of the challenges Bernardo de Gálvez faced in his campaign and the solutions he applied can provide significant lessons to modern military officers. Thus, the main purpose of this thesis is to analyze his campaign from a military point of view and study the challenges he faced and the ways he overcame them. Finally, I conclude the thesis with a synthesis of the lessons that can be learned from history and some recommendations for application in future conflicts.

For field grade officers, it is very important to understand the war and the circumstances and factors that influence military conflicts. Our predecessors in arms are an extraordinary source of experiences and practical lessons, and I feel that General Bernardo de Gálvez and his campaigns in America can afford many examples and

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<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, “Bernardo De Galvez-Fort Matanzas National Monument,” July 9, 2014, accessed September 25, 2014, <http://www.nps.gov/foma/historyculture/galvez.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> GovTrack.us, “Text of Conferring Honorary Citizenship of the United States on Bernardo De Galvez Y Madrid, Viscount of Galveston and Count of Galvez,” accessed April 22, 2015, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hjres105/text>.

valuable lessons worthy of study. Additionally, my military education and experience can provide a military perspective for the study of the historical facts, the analysis of the campaign and the synthesis of the lessons.

### Primary Research Question

How did Bernardo de Gálvez overcome the challenges he faced in his military campaign to regain West Florida for Spain?

### Secondary Research Questions

Which were the main challenges Bernardo de Gálvez faced during his campaign?

Which were the orders, the support and the information he received from Spain to conduct his campaign?

How did Spain manage the observers during the war? What useful information did they provide? What information did they miss?

How was Gálvez able to build an army with such a wide diversity of people of different origins, cultures, languages and level of training?

How did he plan his campaign? Which were his decisive points and objectives?

How was the cooperation with the French and the American rebels?

How did he command and control the variety of joint forces?

How did he plan his logistic concept to ensure the supplies to his troops?

### Limitations

As is true of every historical study, documentation is the main constraint of this research. Historians provide us the legacy of our predecessors and the only facts we can consider are those that somebody wrote in that time. The American Revolutionary War is

well documented, but we have to consider that for both the Spanish and the Americans of the time, the fights around Florida were not the most important.

From an American perspective, the Spanish campaigns in America indirectly influenced the war because Spain was fighting for her own interests and not those of the Americans. On the other hand, from a Spanish perspective, the American campaign was a secondary one, while the European campaigns to recover Mallorca and Gibraltar were the main effort.

### Delimitations

This research will be focused on the military aspects of General Bernardo de Gálvez campaign to regain West Florida and the challenges he faced. This study does not cover the political aspects of the conflict-except those needed to understand the strategic considerations-nor the political consequences of the victories.

### Conclusion

The American Revolutionary War became a global war when France and Spain entered in it. Despite the fact that the Spanish contribution has not been historically well recognized, it was very important and had a great impact on the outcome of war. General Bernardo de Gálvez conducted the Spanish campaign to recover Florida for Spain and support the American Revolution. He was a great leader and proved to be an effective military commander that overcome the difficulties he faced to accomplish his mission. The detailed study of his campaign, the challenges and the ways he overcame them can afford valuable lessons for professionals practitioners of military art and science.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The American Revolution War saw the birth of one of the main powers in the world, and it is a very-well studied conflict. The colonies fighting for their independence against the British were the main actors of the conflict but, Spain, France, and other powers encouraged by the Seven Year's War results decided to take part on it. There is a wide range of literature related to the different aspects of this war for independence. The most relevant ones for the purposes of this study are: the Spanish contribution, the Florida campaign, and the image of General Gálvez.

Some historians have looked to the American Revolutionary War as a real global war. They have taken into account all the actors that participated throughout the world and all the theaters related to the conflict. For instance, US Colonel Ernest Dupuy, Grace P. Hayes and Gay M. Hammerman published in 1977 *The American Revolution, a Global War*.<sup>4</sup> This book reveals the world-wide scope of this global war and considers all the theaters involved in the conflict: the American continent, the Caribbean Sea, Europe, the African coast, and India.

However, most of the studies on the American Revolutionary War focus on the conflict in the American continent, which was the main theater of operations for the colonies fighting for their independence. Other important contributions to the war, like that of the Spanish are treated only tangentially. Some relevant works at this level are

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Ernest Dupuy, Gay M. Hammerman, and Grace P. Hayes, *The American Revolution, a Global War* (New York: D. Mckay, 1977).

1776 by David McCullough, *The American Revolution* by Joshep Morton, or *The American Revolution: A Concise History* written by professor Robert Allison.<sup>5</sup>

But the Spanish contribution to the American Revolutionary War was also relevant because of the supplies provided to the rebels, and the campaigns executed to recover Florida and cover the southern flank of the continental theater. Additionally, since Spain declared the war to the British in 1779 they fought in many different fronts such as in Florida, in the Caribbean Sea, in Nicaragua, in the Azores Islands; but also in Gibraltar and Minorca in Europe. There exists enough literature covering all these theaters of operations, analyzing the role of Spain in this war and proving its relevance to the result of the conflict. Some of the works are *Spain: The Forgotten Alliance: Independence of the United States* by Martha Gutierrez, *España y la Independencia de Estados Unidos* by Thomas E. Chavez, or the classic *España Ante La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos* by Juan F. Utrilla.<sup>6</sup>

Other studies are more specific and analyze some particular aspects concerning the Spanish intervention in the war like the *Spanish Observers and the American Revolution, 1775-1783* by Light T. Cummins or *The Texas Connection with the American*

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph C. Morton, *The American Revolution* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003); David G. McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005); Robert J. Allison, *The American Revolution: A Concise History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Martha Steincamp, *Spain: The Forgotten Alliance: Independence of the United States* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013); Thomas E. Chavez, *España y la Independencia de Estados Unidos* (Madrid: Santillana Ediciones Generales, 2006); Juan F. Utrilla, *España Ante La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 2nd ed. (Lérida: Gráficos Academia Mariana, 1925).



*Revolution* by Robert Thonhoff.<sup>7</sup> Both provide useful information to understand the operations of Spanish forces during the war, and the connections with the American rebels and their logistic system.

Other books and documents focus on how Spain defeated Great Britain in the West Florida Campaign relating the campaigns of Bernardo de Gálvez. The books *Yo Solo* ( . . . ) by Carmen de Reparaz and *España contraataca* ( . . . ) by Pablo Victoria concerning the Florida Campaign cover the facts from a historical point of view.<sup>8</sup> They are important sources of information for the military aspects of the present research. The Gálvez diary of operations in Panzacola (the most relevant major operation) is another important document available now in the internet. Additionally, Spain has an immense historical heritage and a considerable amount of historical data is stored in the historical archives of “Indias” or “Simancas” and in the Spanish museums.

Bernardo de Gálvez was a key player in the era of the American Revolution. He was a great general but additionally, he was an excellent governor. Several existing biographies can provide valuable information to understand on why he was the way he was, and acted with so much success both in military and in political life. The works by Russell Roberts and Jose Boeta are good biographical studies.

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<sup>7</sup> Light T. Cummins, *Spanish Observers and the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Robert H. Thonhoff, *The Texas Connection with the American Revolution* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> Carmen de Reparaz, *Yo Sólo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos* (Barcelona: Ediciones Del Serbal, 1986); Pablo E. Victoria, *España Contraataca: Relato Sobre La Derrota Del Imperio Inglés En Norteamérica* (Barcelona: Altera, 2007).

In addition to the existent literature about the topic, the military knowledge of the author is another relevant factor in this research. The author is a graduate from the Academia General Militar in Zaragoza (Spain), the Escuela de Guerra in Zaragoza (Spain), and conducted this research at the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth (United States of America). He has experienced several operational deployments and has acquired a rich background of military knowledge and experience that is applied in this research.

Data collection and its analysis from a military perspective is the main methodology employed during this research to answer both the primary and secondary research questions. The existent literature is the main source of information. The existence of an association dedicated to the memory of Bernardo de Gálvez has constituted another source of interesting data. The wisdom and knowledge of its members have provided useful information and support to effectively analyze the military campaign and to obtain the literature needed. Thus, the methodology relies on the detailed study and analysis of the existent literature from a military point of view, considering the operational environment and the mission, with an eye to extracting lessons for contemporary practitioners of military art and science.

CHAPTER 3  
HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF THE GÁLVEZ  
CAMPAIGN TO REGAIN WEST FLORIDA

Framing Gálvez's Campaign in the  
American Revolutionary War

Historical Context

Christopher Columbus never imagined that the land he discovered would be the scenario for a major conflict among the main world powers approximately 300 years after his arrival. The American continent remained quite wild compared to Europe at the beginning of the 18th century. A considerable percentage of North America remained unexplored while the territory was distributed among the three main European powers.

Spain owned most of the colonies in the Americas since Columbus' arrival. The French and the British owned some minor territories and islands in the continent, but almost the entire continent of South America, except Brazil, was Spanish as well as Central America and a considerable portion of North America. The black legend about Spain that some historians follow pretends to show that the Spanish empire was ephemeral and significant only in the 16th century. However, the Spanish empire started with Columbus' discoveries in the 15th century and remained significant until the beginning of the 19th century, when most of the colonies gained their independence. Notwithstanding the period of decadence in Spain in the second half of the 17th century, the overseas colonies remained untouched until the 19th century.<sup>9</sup> None of the English,

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<sup>9</sup> The Spanish decadence started with the lost of Flanders and other European territories. It was due to excessive war cost and political mistakes. Extracted from a Spanish Ministry of Education website providing resources for learning in high school.

Dutch or French (the other significant naval powers) intrusions succeeded in bringing down the Spanish empire in the so called New World.<sup>10</sup>

On the contrary, the 18th century was a period of prosperity for the Spanish kingdom. Spain recovered economically. In foreign affairs, Spain made alliances with France and some lost European territories were recovered by Spain.<sup>11</sup> In the military, there was great progress. Concretely, there was a great impulse in the Spanish navy in shipbuilding. The royal shipyards built a total of 227 new ships during the 18th century and 74 of them were built in the Havana Royal Shipyard which, while distant, was cost-competitive.<sup>12</sup> Don Blas de Lezo had protected the Spanish territories from the British expansion in Cartagena de Indias and there was a certain equilibrium in naval power in the oceans. On the other hand, France and the British kingdom were the other relevant powers in the American continent.

French presence in the American continent was considerable during the 17th and 18th century. They arrived in Quebec in 1608 and owned some interior territories in North America and some islands which were prized for sugar production in the Caribbean Sea. By 1750, they were moving in from Canada to Louisiana through the Mississippi River, trading furs, making treaties with the natives, and establishing forts to

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“Tema7\_el Ocasoimperioespañol,” accessed April 23, 2015, [http://alerce.pntic.mec.es/lsam0005/2bach\\_historia/tema7\\_ocaso\\_imperio.html](http://alerce.pntic.mec.es/lsam0005/2bach_historia/tema7_ocaso_imperio.html).

<sup>10</sup> John D. Harbron, *Trafalgar and the Spanish Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 2.

<sup>11</sup> The alliances were called ‘Family Compacts’ because Spanish and French Kings were relatives.

<sup>12</sup> Harbron, *Trafalgar and the Spanish Navy*, 15.

protect their trade and cities.<sup>13</sup> Thus, they were expanding continentally without many impediments.

During this time, the British interests in North America were focused mainly on Jamaica and Barbados. These sugar-producing islands provided profits to the British West India Company.<sup>14</sup> Great Britain also claimed some areas in the continent where they controlled the Atlantic coast with thirteen colonies, and also claimed those areas in the interior of the continent drained by the Mississippi and the Ohio where several native tribes lived.<sup>15</sup>

In 1756, tensions in Europe led to a conflict among most of the European nations. Spain was eventually forced to enter this war because of the “Family Compact” between the Spanish and French Bourbon monarchs. The Seven Years War (1756 to 1763) was fought on three different fronts: the European, the American and the Indian. The British and their allies won this war and its result changed the North American political configuration: France yielded Louisiana to Spain (1762) and finally lost all her continental territories in North America, while Great Britain annexed Canada and Florida (1763).<sup>16</sup> This territorial configuration was in place when the American Revolutionary War began.

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<sup>13</sup> Allison, *The American Revolution: A Concise History*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Consequence of the Treaties of Fontainebleau and Paris. Alejandro del Cantillo. *Tratados, convenios y declaraciones de paz y de comercio: que han hecho con las potencias extranjeras los monarcas españoles de la Casa de Borbon: Desde el año de 1700 hasta el día* (Madrid: Alegria Y Charlain, 1843), 485-500.



Figure 1. North American Continent in the Beginning of the American Revolutionary War

Source: Slide Share, “Empire, War, and Colonial Rebellion,” accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.slideshare.net/h8h8rr/empire-war-colonial-rebellion-presentation>, Slide 39.

### The American Revolution

British settlers in the American continent had organized a total of 13 colonies along the East coast. They had grown with very different populations, economic systems, social structures, and enjoyed little official communication among them except through London.<sup>17</sup> They were not the main focus for the British, which were more concerned about the profits generated from the sugar from the islands, but they grew fast. From the

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<sup>17</sup> Allison, *The American Revolution*, 3.

80,000 English people who arrived in America since 1607, by 1751 there were more than a million English descendants along with growing numbers of other European and African people.<sup>18</sup>

The British Kingdom started to change its policies toward the colonies after the Seven Years War. Several facts began to degrade the relationship between the Crown and the colonies. On the one hand, the British barred the founding of new settlements in the interior of the continent with the proclamation line of 1763, to avoid further conflicts with the natives because the crown would not send more forces to fight the natives.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the British authorities started to impose greater taxes on the colonies through various legislative acts, like the Sugar Act in 1764, the Stamp Act in 1765 or the Tea Act in 1773.<sup>20</sup> This last one definitely provoked an energetic reaction in Boston and is considered for some historians the beginning of the revolt. To summarize, since the end of the Seven Years War, the British modified their policy to gain a higher control over colonies, which had enjoyed great levels of self-governance and growth in their first 150 years.

The colonies had a clear conscience of their own identity and considered the taxes illegal. Although there were some attempts to resolve peacefully the problem, in general, the British reaction was hard and intolerant. They started sending troops to ensure

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6-16.

security and passed laws such as the Restraining Acts in 1775 in Parliament to impose British sovereignty by law.<sup>21</sup>

Tensions kept growing while the colonies started to get organized for political and military action. American patriot militias started to mobilize in the colonies while the colonies sent representatives to the first Continental Congress in 1774.<sup>22</sup> The war began in the northern territories, with some skirmishes in Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill in 1775. These were easily suppressed by the British army. In 4 July 1776, the Congress signed the Declaration of Independence, which consolidated the revolt. This declaration also served as example and inspiration to other nations and territories that aspired to liberty and self-governance.

During 1776 and 1777, the war remained confined to the northern area of the North American territory (New England and the middle colonies) where the British forces kept achieving victories in Trenton, Princeton, and Brandywine. During those early years Spanish and French supplies were key to the sustainment of the revolution. But the war started pivoting in Saratoga October 1777 when General Washington's troops achieved a clear victory and forced the surrender of the British troops. This battle marked a point of inflexion in the war.

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<sup>21</sup> The restraining acts were the British reaction to boycott of British goods the colonies started. The acts entailed the prohibition to trade with any nation different to Great Britain and the bar of the ships. The History Place, "American Revolution: Prelude to Revolution," accessed April 23, 2015, <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/revolution/rev-prel.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> The Continental Congress took the government role in the recently united colonies. Allison, *The American Revolution*, 16-36.



The American victory in Saratoga animated other powers to join the war and it entered into a new phase. In March 1778 France entered the war, as did Spain in May 1779 and then the British crown declared war on the Netherlands in December 1780. Thus, the war in North America became a global war, fought by men from many nations, speaking different languages, and owing their allegiance to kings and potentates far from the colonies.<sup>23</sup> Additional theaters of war were opened in the Caribbean, Central America, East India, the British Isles, and strategic points in Europe like Gibraltar and Minorca.

The continental war in the colonies also entered into a different stage after Saratoga. It expanded to all the colonies. The new American Continental Army commanded by George Washington, with the French and Spanish support, was able to win a decisive victory at Yorktown, where General Cornwallis surrendered in 19 October 1781. Soon thereafter, in April 1782, the Americans and the British began the talks to sign the Treaty of Paris, to end the war.

### Spain and the American Revolution

The political context for this study is based on the conclusions from the detailed study about Spain and the Independence of the United States by Yela Utrilla.<sup>24</sup> According to the author, Spain could not be indifferent to the war started between Great Britain and its colonies in North America. Spain had important interests to defend; moreover, after

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<sup>23</sup> Dupuy, Hammerman, and Hayes, *The American Revolution, a Global War*, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Utrilla, *España Ante La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*.

France entered the war, Spain was also obliged to support France because of the Family Compact between the two Bourbon kings.<sup>25</sup>

Spain, since the beginning, showed support and sympathy for the American struggle for liberty. As evidence, let us remember the great amount of supplies and money that were provided to the colonies. On the contrary, Spain had to be very wary when supporting the revolt, because the desire for freedom and self-governance could be contagious and extend to Spanish territories, not only in the New World, but also in Spanish society itself which was still governed by the autocratic old regime under the Bourbons. Moreover, and in contrast to France, Spain stood to lose many territories in case of defeat in war with the British.

In his study, Yela Utrilla defends the idea that Spanish interests would have been better served by signing an alliance with the British.<sup>26</sup> The Spanish politicians tried it with diplomacy.<sup>27</sup> However, Carlos III and his government decided to support the colonies' project since the beginning.<sup>28</sup> This support was provided in two ways. Firstly, by furnishing of supplies and money to support the campaign.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, with military

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<sup>25</sup> The Spanish interests were not only the Spanish territories in North America, but also Central America and most important, the strategic locations of Gibraltar and Minorca in Europe.

<sup>26</sup> Utrilla, *España ante la Independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 484.

<sup>27</sup> Dupuy, Hammerman, and Hayes, *The American Revolution, a Global War*, 119.

<sup>28</sup> Documents dated March of 1776 prove the Spanish Secretary of State's agreement about the supplies. Utrilla, *España ante la Independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Yorktown would have not been possible without the Spanish money provided. Thomas E. Chavez depicts it clearly in its book, 287-293.

operations. Although there was not an alliance between Spain and the new United States, they complemented each other at the Operational and Tactical level, opening new fronts, keeping enemy forces distracted and executing complementary tasks. Despite this cooperation, American and the Spanish politicians could not sign a formal alliance because of lack of diplomatic agreement on larger strategic issues. On the one hand, the question of who would control the navigation along the Mississippi, and the establishment of boundaries between Spanish and American territories seemed difficult problems to solve. On the other hand, the politicians lacked the audacity that characterized so many military leaders. Thus, despite the willingness of both sides, and the huge quantities of money and supplies provided by Spain to the colonies, John Jay, who was the American representative in Spain, left Madrid in 1782 without having closed the treaty between Spain and the colonies.<sup>30</sup>

From a military point of view, this war between Spain and the British Kingdom was conducted in four different fronts: Minorca, Gibraltar, the Mosquito Coast, and Florida. The European fronts required a great quantity of forces, and they resulted in the Spanish recovery of Minorca and the British victory in Gibraltar. However, the Mosquito Coast in Central America was strategically a very important front.<sup>31</sup> The British were trying to capture the whole isthmus of Central America and gain the capacity to transfer forces from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast, but Don Matias de Gálvez was able to defeat them. In Louisiana, Don Bernardo de Gálvez, his son, conducted the campaign

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<sup>30</sup> Utrilla, *España Ante La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 447-453.

<sup>31</sup> The Mosquito Coast covers approximately the Eastern coast of the present-day Nicaragua.

which is the focus of this thesis, and recovered Florida for Spain. Later, the younger Gálvez would provide the supplies and support required for the American success in the decisive siege of Yorktown.

### Gálvez and his Early Years in Louisiana

#### Don Bernardo de Gálvez: A brief Biography

Don Bernardo de Gálvez<sup>32</sup> was born on 23 July 1746 in Macharaviaya, a small town in Málaga (Spain). He was the older son of General Matías de Gálvez which also played a relevant role during the American Revolutionary War defending the Mosquito Coast from British attacks.

Bernardo de Gálvez began his military career in 1762 when he participated in the Seven Years War as a volunteer. He fought as a lieutenant of infantry against Portugal which was then allied to England. The results of the Seven Years War were very bad for Spain. She lost Florida to England and received the vast and unexplored Louisiana Territory from France at the Peace of Paris in 1763. In 1765 Gálvez was assigned as a Captain to the Fixed Infantry Regiment in New Spain, currently Mexico. In 1770 he fought against the Apache Indians when he was posted in Chihuahua where he demonstrated superior leadership in a difficult campaign driving the tired troops to great efforts. In 1772 he was posted to the Cantabria Regiment in France where he learned the French language, a very useful skill that would be very helpful for his later assignments in Louisiana. In 1775 he was assigned to the Seville Infantry Regiment which fought in

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<sup>32</sup> This section is based on the biographical data depicted by Carmen de Reparaz *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*.

Argel under the command of Alejandro O'Reilly. There, he was seriously wounded but kept commanding his company until the accomplishment of his mission.<sup>33</sup> For his bravery, he was rewarded with a promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.<sup>34</sup>

In May 1776 Gálvez returned to the New World as a colonel in command of the Fixed Regiment in Louisiana, based in New Orleans.<sup>35</sup> In July he was named interim governor of Louisiana succeeding Don Luis Unzaga y Amezaga. In 1 January 1777 Gálvez was officially named governor. In his new role, he continued to provide money and supplies to the American Revolution and intensified patrols to prevent any British action in the area. In 1777 he married Felicitas de Saint Maxent, a beautiful creole woman. In 1779, after Spain declared war on the Kingdom of Great Britain he conducted the campaign to recover Florida for Spain.

In 1784 Gálvez returned to Spain and had an important diplomatic role regarding political issues with North America, like the recognition of the United States, the limits of Florida and negotiations regarding the rights of navigation along the Mississippi River. In 1785 he was named Viceroy of New Spain succeeding his father.<sup>36</sup> He had to face very difficult times in New Spain due to the scarcity of food and a great epidemic of plague. He distinguished himself fighting those problems and was very appreciated by the

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<sup>33</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> In the same year, D. Jose de Gálvez (his uncle) was named Ministry of Indias. Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 15.

<sup>36</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 24.

people. As Carmen de Reparaz wrote “the power and prestige of Gálvez had no rival in the huge Spanish territories in North America.”<sup>37</sup> He died of an illness on 30 November 1786.

#### Louisiana from Ulloa to Gálvez-Clandestine Support to the American Revolution

France yielded Louisiana to Spain in 1762 in the Treaty of Fointanebleau as a consequence of the Seven Years War. Don Antonio de Ulloa was the first Spanish Governor of Louisiana and had to deal with the French Colonists who did not approve of the change. Two years after his arrival (1768) there was a revolt. The Spanish Crown sent General Alejandro O'Reilly to quell the rebellion. He crushed the revolt and punished the rebels severely winning the title of “Bloody O'Reilly.”<sup>38</sup> In 1770, Don Luis de Unzaga succeeded him as governor over the hostile Louisiana population.

Unzaga's style was very different from that of his predecessors. He was a competent politician and was able to win the hearts of the people with fairness and good governance. He made progress for the province by agreeing to a free trade policy with both Americans and British. Later, he started furnishing the rebels with the secret supplies the Spanish Crown ordered through Mr. Oliver Pollock, a successful businessman who had been appointed American representative at the Spanish colony. As an example, Unzaga secretly delivered 7,500 pounds of powder to General Charles Lee to

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>38</sup> Miriam G. Reeves, *The Governors of Louisiana*, 3rd ed. (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1972), 24.

defend Pittsburg and Wheeling from the British and the Indians. Pollock in turn, shipped another 2,500 pounds of powder to support the Philadelphia rebellion.<sup>39</sup>

Don Bernardo de Gálvez succeeded officially Don Luis de Unzaga on 1 January 1777 and the transition period was smooth, as they worked together for several weeks.<sup>40</sup> Don Bernardo arrived with instructions from the Spanish king to strengthen the defenses in Louisiana and get information from the British actions in America.<sup>41</sup> He inherited an excellent domestic situation from Unzaga, who had secured popular support and some important contacts with leaders of the American Revolution.

Don Bernardo de Gálvez increased significantly the activities in favor of the Americans and against the British in several respects. First, he decided to end smuggling along the Mississippi and subsequently confiscated several ships. This had a negative impact mainly on British interests.<sup>42</sup> Second, he continued and increased the delivery of secret supplies ordered by the Spanish king in support of the American rebels. He effectively supplied the Americans supporting the successful campaigns of George Rogers Clark against the Indians and then against the British in the Trans-Allegheny region.<sup>43</sup> His supplies also helped General Washington's army.<sup>44</sup> Third, following the

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<sup>39</sup> Joe Gray Taylor, *Louisiana, a Bicentennial History* (New York: Norton, 1976), 31-32.

<sup>40</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 139.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

crown's policy in favor of the Americans, he protected some American rebels and refugees. For example, when James Willing launched an expedition to persuade—by force, if needed—the West Florida population to join the revolution, he was pursued by the British and had to flee into Louisiana, where Governor Gálvez protected him.<sup>45</sup> Peter Chester, governor of the British West Florida, knowing some of these activities protested about them but could not do anything because he did not have the means to react.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Gálvez was already thinking in terms of launching an offensive campaign.<sup>47</sup>

### The West Florida Military Campaign

When Don Bernardo de Gálvez assumed his duties as a governor, he believed that he would quite probably have to fight the British. One of the first things he did since his arrival was to understand the operational environment. He kept working for the prosperity of the region, and very quickly he won the hearts of the population, but not only those of the existing settlers; he also accepted new settlers from other colonies and some more from Spain. Moreover, he established contacts with the Indians because he knew how useful they could be in case of war. Additionally, he ordered the creation of maps and to reconnoiter along the boundaries with the British.<sup>48</sup> The east boundary of Louisiana was the Mississippi River, which had forts on both sides of the river, Spanish on the west side, and British on the east side.

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<sup>45</sup> Taylor, *Louisiana: A Bicentennial History*, 32.

<sup>46</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 152.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 75.



From an operational perspective, there were three relevant elements in the area. First, was the city of New Orleans, it was the main city, the center of social, economic and political life in Louisiana. It was strategically located with access to the Gulf of Mexico from the Mississippi River. It was in Spanish hands, but Don Bernardo de Gálvez felt that it could be a campaign objective for the British because of its importance. Second, the Mississippi River was the main travel artery for the colonies. It supplied the whole continent because the British had blockaded the main Atlantic ports with their navy. The rebellion could not have succeeded without the Spanish providing supplies and allowing them transit through the river. Oliver Pollock was the commercial representative from the Colonies that made the transfer of supplies possible. The third element was Pensacola, the economic and political capital city of West Florida. It dominated the Gulf of Mexico and whoever controlled it could threaten New Orleans.

There were reasons to believe that the enemy could attempt an envelopment from the north, closing the lines of supplies through the Mississippi River, as it had been planned by Hamilton (Governor of Quebec) in 1777, or from Florida in the east, as Major General Augustine Prevost, commander of the British forces in East Florida, planned to do once he was reinforced with the expeditionary forces of Colonel John Campbell toward the end of 1778.<sup>49</sup>

General Gálvez's campaign consisted of two different major operations. The first one was executed to gain full control of the Mississippi River, seizing the British forts in the east side of the river. Once this was achieved, and the Spanish forces secured their lines of communications, flank and rearguard, the second major operation could be

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 97.

conducted to seize Pensacola as final strategic objective. An intermediate objective was Mobile which was a relevant port situated between New Orleans and Pensacola, but the initial idea was to conquer Mobile and then Pensacola, without any operational pause.



Figure 2. Campaign Overview

*Source:* Library of Congress.

The figure 2 illustrates the location of the different British forts Don Bernardo de Gálvez seized during his campaign. The next sections will describe the execution of the two major combat operations. The beginning of the campaign was the military operations along the Mississippi River, and the seizure of Fort Bute in Manchac.

## Major Combat Operations in the Mississippi River

By 18 May 1779 Madrid had given her colonies the unambiguous warning about probable British courses of action. On 13 July 1779 Governor Gálvez convened a council of war in New Orleans with all the military representatives of the province, including the commanders of both regular forces and militia, to analyze the situation. A British attack was expected from the north, starting from Fort Michilimackinac in Michigan to attack Saint Louis and follow the Mississippi river south to seize New Orleans.<sup>50</sup> It would be complemented with another attack from the south, with British Forces under General Campbell's command from Pensacola or Jamaica to gain control of the Mississippi River.<sup>51</sup> Gálvez had good intelligence about the enemy and the terrain.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, his father-in-law had provided him the maps of Fort Bute and he had also seen the maps of Baton Rouge and Natchez.<sup>53</sup> With this information and being aware of the difficulties he would face in the defense if were to lose the surprise, he decided to attack.

Spain declared war formally on the British kingdom in 16 June 1779, but the news did not arrive in Louisiana until end of July. On 17 August, Gálvez sent copies of his plans and requested reinforcements to Don Diego Jose Navarro, governor and Captain

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<sup>50</sup> Fernando Martinez Lainez and Carlos Canales Torres, *Banderas Lejanas: La Exploración, Conquista Y Defensa Por España Del Territorio De Los Actuales Estados Unidos* (Madrid: Edaf, 2009), 268.

<sup>51</sup> William Lee Jenks, *Patrick Sinclair* (Lansing, MI: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford, State Printers, 1914), 26-27.

<sup>52</sup> The Major Jacinto Panis had executed a secret mission to assess the terrain and the enemy through the Mississippi and Pensacola.

<sup>53</sup> Martinez and Canales, *Banderas Lejanas: La Exploración, Conquista Y Defensa Por España Del Territorio De Los Actuales Estados Unidos*, 268.

General of Cuba, who had the troops needed to support his campaign.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, Gálvez notified all the commanders about the declaration of war and requested them to form militias to support the mission. Current reports about the enemy's state of preparation were favorable to the mission. When everything seemed favorable, on 18 August, a terrible hurricane devastated New Orleans but it did not affect the northern British forts. Now, the city was even more vulnerable, there were considerable losses and a certain level of confusion. It was, definitely, the type of situation that required a respected and strong leader.<sup>55</sup>

In this situation, on 27 August 1779, Gálvez started his movement to conquer the British shores of the Mississippi. His contingent was diverse, complex and multiethnic. Captain Julian Alvarez commanded the fleet running up the Mississippi, which included the frigate *Rebecca* led by the American Captain William Pickles. The land forces under Gálvez's command, included 500 regular soldiers from the Louisiana Fixed Regiment, militias, whites, coloreds, creoles, and even nine Americans who fought with the American flag and under the command of Oliver Pollock, the American representative.<sup>56</sup> These forces amounted to less than 700 men. The force conducted a hard march on the enemy side of the Mississippi until their arrival to Fort Bute, which was the first campaign objective.

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<sup>54</sup> Cuba's military Captaincy included the Cuba island and Louisiana.

<sup>55</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 249.

<sup>56</sup> Martinez and Canales, *Banderas Lejanas: La Exploración, Conquista Y Defensa Por España Del Territorio De Los Actuales Estados Unidos*, 268.

While the main body of the land forces was marching towards Fort Bute, Major Francisco Collel led an incursion 30 km away from Manchac in order to cut the enemy line of communications between the Marrepas Lake and the Mississippi River.<sup>57</sup> They captured some British ships and also Fort Graham. On the other hand, British reinforcement by sea was quite improbable, because the French Admiral Charles Henri Count D'Estaing's fleet kept the British naval forces busy in the Caribbean.

British Colonel Alexander Dickson, not knowing even that Spain had declared war on the British kingdom, decided not to fight at Fort Bute and moved most of his troops to Baton Rouge on 3 September 1779. On 7 September, the Spaniards arrived and attacked the fort, finding almost no resistance. The balance of the first fight in the war was 20 soldiers captured and one British casualty. There were no casualties in the Spanish forces, but Gálvez gave some days of rest to the troops which were exhausted after the march to reach Fort Bute. The next step in the military operations would be the seizure of Baton Rouge, Natchez, and the subsequent consolidation of the captured territory.

On 20 September, the land forces arrived at Fort Richmond in Baton Rouge, which was better protected with a garrison of 550 soldiers and a six meter wide pit around the palisade.<sup>58</sup> An attack on this strong point required some preparation. Gálvez had left some troops in Manchac to prevent any enemy reinforcement from there or Pensacola. He sent also a small detachment to prevent enemy reinforcements coming

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<sup>57</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 250.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 251.

from Natchez and designed a small stratagem to divert the enemy's attention from the main attack.

During the night, small elements of the Spanish force created a diversion from the forest getting the garrison's attention and forcing the enemy to commit his artillery on them. In the meantime, Captain Julián Alvarez prepared three trenches and positioned his artillery properly. The main attack started at sunrise and the artillery positions prepared during the night were so effective that Colonel Dickson surrendered the fort after three hours of fighting.<sup>59</sup> The assault was not needed and the conditions of the capitulation were excellent for Gálvez because Dickson included the surrender of Fort Panmure and Natchez. As a result of the attack, 375 British soldiers were captured in Baton Rouge as well as the eight merchant boats that had brought reinforcements from Pensacola.<sup>60</sup> In total, 575 British regular troops were sent as prisoners to Havana. Gálvez's forces suffered only one dead and two wounded.<sup>61</sup>

Gálvez consolidated his gains during the next weeks. The Spanish Captain Juan de la Villeneuve accepted the surrender of Fort Panmure and so did Oliver Pollock at Natchez. The small pockets of resistance in the area were defeated and the Mississippi's waters were cleared and secured from enemy influence. Carlos Grand Pre, the commander of the military post in Natchez, seized the remaining British posts along the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Victoria, *España Contraataca: Relato Sobre La Derrota Del Imperio Inglés En Norteamérica*, 143.

Amitie River (a Mississippi tributary) and Thomson Creek.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, Vicente Rillieux, a creole militiaman under Gálvez's command distinguished himself in the Amitie River, when his force of 70 Spaniards, captured a British ship with almost 500 soldiers onboard.<sup>63</sup>

In not much more than a month the Mississippi was entirely under Spanish control. Thus Spain obtained the capacity to ship forces and supplies through the main inland waterway. The British were blocked and could not transfer forces anymore from Michilimackinac to Pensacola. More importantly, they did not have the strength to drive out the Spanish from Louisiana. Moreover, another unexpected benefit from the quick victory was the interception of British correspondence which was an excellent source of intelligence for the subsequent decisive operation.<sup>64</sup> Once the Mississippi River was under Spanish control, the second major combat operation to seize West Florida started. The operations in the Gulf of Mexico were more complex and lasted longer. Additionally, in the meantime, the Spaniards had to fight again along the Mississippi River to defend Saint Louis and avoid any enemy infiltration from the north.

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<sup>62</sup> Louisiana's Military Heritage, "The West Florida Campaign and the 1st Battle of Baton Rouge," accessed January 28, 2015, <http://www.usskidd.com/battles-revolution.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Martinez and Canales, *Banderas Lejanas: La Exploración, Conquista Y Defensa Por España Del Territorio De Los Actuales Estados Unidos*, 271.

<sup>64</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 252.

## Major Combat Operations in the Gulf of Mexico and Defense of Saint Louis

### The Beginning of the Operations in the Gulf of Mexico

New Orleans received Gálvez and his troops with joy and a great parade, but the recently promoted field marshal did not rest for long.<sup>65</sup> Mobile and Pensacola were the next objectives and he started preparing immediately for the next operations. He knew he had to move fast and take advantage of the weakness of the British in that moment. To prepare for the next operations, he started to gather every asset he could get because the conquest of Mobile and Pensacola would not be easy. In contrast to the Mississippi posts, the two coastal posts were well defended and fortified. Furthermore, enemy forces in Pensacola would probably have received the reinforcements of General Campbell's expeditionary force. The plan was to gather enough forces to conquer Mobile and subsequently Pensacola while coordinating his attack with some American operations that would help to divert potential British reinforcements.

Gálvez expected the reinforcements he had requested from Havana. In the beginning of the Mississippi operations (August 1779), he had sent his plans to the Governor of Cuba and had requested 7,000 men to execute the conquest of Mobile and Pensacola. But the authorities in Havana thought that 3,200 men should be enough.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, no reinforcements had arrived, so Gálvez sent Lieutenant Colonel Don

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<sup>65</sup> As a result of the Mississippi Campaign, Don Bernardo de Gálvez was promoted to Field Marshall. Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 21.

<sup>66</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 248.



Esteban Miró from the Louisiana Regiment, as personal emissary to solve the issue.<sup>67</sup>

However, his intervention was not as fruitful as expected. The authorities in Havana did not agree with Gálvez's estimates. They reduced the number of reinforcements and delayed their departure as much as they could. Finally, only a battalion from the Regiment of Navarra arrived in time to support Gálvez's conquest of Mobile. It was commanded by Colonel Don José de Ezpeleta, who was Bernardo de Gálvez's friend.<sup>68</sup> As we will see later, the rest of the reinforcements did not arrive in time.

On the other hand, Gálvez coordinated a diversionary operation with the Americans. The war between the British crown and the colonies was spreading to the south and Washington had stated during a conference in West Point in 1779 that an attack on Mobile and Pensacola would be desirable.<sup>69</sup> Gálvez requested that the Americans coordinate a movement of troops to the south (Georgia) in order to divert British forces from Pensacola and Mobile.<sup>70</sup> The Spanish observer Juan Miralles established contacts with the American Congress and General Washington, and they agreed on the importance of the Spanish campaign. Finally, Miralles reported to Cuba that some American troops had been sent to South Carolina and Georgia.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>70</sup> This coordination was executed by Juan de Miralles, who was a Spanish businessman named observer in the Continental Congress and had contact with Washington.

<sup>71</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 254.

In the beginning of 1780, Gálvez restarted the operations moving from New Orleans with a force of 1,200 multiethnic mixed troops, in fourteen boats.<sup>72</sup> The weather was against him again. The trip was longer than expected and, finally, when entering Mobile Bay a hurricane hit the Spanish expedition. As a result, approximately 400 soldiers died and six boats were lost as well as a considerable quantity of supplies and ammunition.<sup>73</sup> The situation was critical and it was 13 February when Gálvez was able to gather all his troops again.<sup>74</sup> Thankfully, three days later, Colonel Ezpeleta and Lieutenant Colonel Miró arrived from Havana in four boats with 200 soldiers and some supplies. The Spanish installed a battery to protect the entrance of the bay.

In the meantime, when General Campbell in Pensacola received the report of the situation in Mobile, he initiated his movement with 1,100 soldiers to reinforce its defense.<sup>75</sup> Gálvez had lost the element of surprise and the clock was ticking against him. Despite the bad conditions of the Spanish, who had just suffered the devastations of a hurricane and shipwreck, Gálvez's audacity would be a key factor again.

The Spanish expedition arrived on the objective on 28 February and the siege started. Major Elias Durnford defended Fort Charlotte with approximately 300 men. By

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<sup>72</sup> Cesareo Fernandez Duro, *Armada Espanola* (S.l.: Est. Tipografico, 1901), VII: 285.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> The dates and details of the siege are taken from Pablo Victoria's book, *España Contraataca: Relato Sobre La Derrota Del Imperio Inglés En Norteamérica* (Barcelona: Ediciones Altera, 2007).

<sup>75</sup> Grupo De Estudios De Historia Militar, "Bernardo De Gálvez (III)–La Toma De Fort Charlotte En Mobila (Alabama), accessed January 28, 2015, <http://www.gehm.es/uncategorized/bernardo-de-Gálvez-iii-la-toma-de-fort-charlotte-en-mobila-alabama/>.

9 March the Spanish started to dig trenches and positioned the batteries while General Campbell with the British relief was 45 kilometers far away. The movement of the British forces had been very difficult because they were marching through tidelands and swampy terrain.<sup>76</sup> On 10 March the Spanish attack started with artillery bombardments from both the land and the sea. Campbell arrived and watched the battlefield. He decided neither to fight nor to commit his forces, and returned to Pensacola. He had arrived too late. During the fight in Fort Charlotte, the British ran out of ammunition and the Spanish opened a big breach. They assaulted and, finally, Dunford surrendered in 14 March 1780. As a result, the Spanish captured 307 prisoners and seized both Fort Charlotte and Mobile, thus accomplishing the first operational objective of the operations in the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>77</sup> Despite the success in Mobile, exploitation was not possible and the Spanish forces experienced an unintended operational pause.

Initially, Gálvez planned to attack Mobile and subsequently, with the same troops, continue the attack to Pensacola. He planned to take advantage of surprise and the bad conditions of the enemy troops after their march to Mobile. Furthermore, most of Gálvez's troops were volunteer militias, and it would be difficult to retain them until summer, when the risk of illness in the area increased significantly. In his efforts to convince the commanders in Havana to support his campaign, he wrote to Juan Bautista Bonet (chief of Naval forces in Havana): "it is impossible to come back . . . not without

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<sup>76</sup> Victoria, *España Contraataca: Relato Sobre La Derrota Del Imperio Inglés En Norteamérica*, 157.

<sup>77</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 257.

losing almost entirely our reputation.”<sup>78</sup> Certainly, he had placed a lot of confidence in the authorities in Havana in order to get the troops needed for his expedition, and the lack of support from the governor was the reason why the operations stalled.

Gálvez had sent Lieutenant Colonel Miró to expedite the reinforcements from Havana just before his departure to conquer Mobile. Finally, the first reinforcements arrived on 16 February with Miró and Ezpeleta in four boats carrying 200 soldiers and some supplies. But they were not all the requested reinforcements. A second convoy with an important quantity of naval forces, set sail in 7 March. There were 41 ships and almost 6,000 men.<sup>79</sup> This convoy was provided to reinforce Gálvez’s attack on Mobile, but the naval authorities from Havana denied its employment to attack Pensacola. These authorities argued that the British batteries established in the entrance of Pensacola Bay, in Red Cliffs Fort, and Saint Rose Island would make any naval attack impossible. They suggested that Gálvez should attack Pensacola only by ground and denied him any naval support.

Finally, after exchanging some mail with the naval authorities, Gálvez held a war council in 4 May with his officers and decided to dissolve the expedition. He understood that an unsupported ground attack would have been a vain sacrifice for the troops.<sup>80</sup> He had lost the element of surprise and, additionally, the transport of artillery and supplies

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Information taken from Carmen De Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 52-53.

<sup>80</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781 : Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 45.

through the ground in Pensacola would have been very difficult. Before returning to New Orleans, he named Ezpeleta Governor of Mobile and commander of Fuerte Carlota.<sup>81</sup> He was provided a garrison of 800 soldiers, artillery, and supplies for six months to defend the fort.<sup>82</sup> Mobile was relevant strategically because of the numerous tribes of Indians located in the area which could become important allies for the Spanish in the near future, and Jose de Ezpeleta, was the right man to defend it, as would become clear later. Unfortunately for the Spaniards, the gathering of troops required an operational pause which the British employed to attack not only Mobile, but also, the important city of Saint Louis in the Mississippi area.

Speed and audacity were key elements for tactical and operational success during the American Revolutionary War. Patrick Sinclair was the British lieutenant-governor in Fort Michilimackinac, an important British post in the South of the Great Lakes, in the British province of Quebec. He organized an expedition to attack Saint Louis in February 1780, when the Spanish troops were concentrated at the siege of Mobile. He gathered a total of 750 men including Indians, traders and servants with the aim to attack Saint Louis and continue south along the Mississippi River to Natchez.<sup>83</sup>

Fernando de Leyba was the Spanish commander and governor of upper Louisiana. His scouts and the American settlers informed him about the British intentions, so he prepared the defense. He recruited a militia and started building a palisade and four

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<sup>81</sup> Victoria, *España Contraataca: Relato Sobre La Derrota Del Imperio Inglés En Norteamérica*, 165.

<sup>82</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 45.

<sup>83</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 261.

towers to protect the city. This fort was named San Carlos.<sup>84</sup> He knew he could not receive any reinforcements from Gálvez, but got 150 men from Saint Genevieve. He counted also with his 60 soldiers and two ships and was able to gather a total of 300 men, including militias, to defend the city from the new Fort San Carlos.<sup>85</sup> He also contacted the American rebels and coordinated plans for a possible counter-attack by them.

Leyba's troops in Fort San Carlos were able to defeat an attack conducted by more than 300 British and 900 Indians in May 1780. Once the initial attack on the fort was defeated, the attackers, and especially the Indians, got frustrated and perpetrated many acts of barbarism around the city.<sup>86</sup> The attack failed, but Leyba was very ill while defending the city, and finally died in 28 June. A plaque reminds visitors of the events that happened in the vicinity of the place stating:

Near this spot stood Fort San Carlos erected in 1780. It was attacked May 28, 1780 by the British and Indians and successfully defended by the Spanish garrison under Captain Fernando de Leyba. This victory prevented Great Britain from gaining control of the Mississippi Valley in the later years of the American Revolutionary War.<sup>87</sup>

When Gálvez received the news in the summer 1780, he immediately sent some supplies to Saint Louis. Francisco Cruzat replaced Leyba and knowing the British would try to attack Saint Louis again, he protected it in a proactive way. He coordinated a

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<sup>84</sup> Fort San Carlos was built with the money collected from the population and Leyba's own money. Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 261.

<sup>85</sup> Figures taken from Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 261-262.

<sup>86</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 263.

<sup>87</sup> Taken from the picture of the plaque, which is accessible on the web page, Waymarking.com, "Fort San Carlos-Missouri Historical Markers," accessed February 13, 2015, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMBMXH\\_Fort\\_San\\_Carlos](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMBMXH_Fort_San_Carlos).

successful expedition with French, Americans, and Indians to the north. The Spanish led expedition, seized Fort Saint Joseph for 24 hours, and burnt the supplies and ammunition stored in it, ending any British attempt to attack upper Louisiana.<sup>88</sup> However, it still took some time and effort from the Spaniards to gather the troops to attack Pensacola. In the meantime, Colonel Ezpeleta effectively defended Mobile.

In 1780, the American theater of war was gaining relevance for the Kingdom of Spain. King Carlos III sent sizeable expeditionary forces to support the operations. A convoy lead by Admiral Jose Solano with sixteen war ships escorting 140 transport ships set sail in April from Cádiz (Spain) and arrived on 4 August in Havana. It carried 12,000 select infantrymen from the Spanish Army.

On the other hand, Don José de Gálvez, the Minister of Indias had expressed to the authorities in Havana his disagreement about the decision of not attacking Pensacola in accordance with Don Bernardo de Gálvez's orders and following the Royal criteria. Additionally, King Carlos III sent a letter empowering General Gálvez as commander in chief for any military operations in the American continent. This new authority meant the naval forces would be placed under his command during siege operations.

Knowing about the arrival of Admiral José Solano's convoy, Don Bernardo de Gálvez arrived in Havana two days in advance of the fleet's arrival. The fleet arrived with Royal orders for the authorities in Cuba to organize a meeting in order to prepare for the expedition to seize Pensacola. The meeting was convened in 13 September and a plan

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<sup>88</sup> Fort Saint Joseph was in the province of Quebec, currently on the south of the state of Michigan.

was completed.<sup>89</sup> There were several delays, but finally, the fleet sailed in 16 October 1780. This fleet consisted of 3,822 soldiers in thirteen war ships and 51 transport ships.<sup>90</sup> Once again, the weather was harsh. A dreadful hurricane surprised them and the fleet was totally dispersed. Some ships sank and most of them were seriously damaged. General Gálvez tried to reorganize the fleet and wanted to continue the attack, but the admirals believed that they absolutely needed to return to Havana. Although Gálvez was disappointed, the fleet returned. Soon thereafter, the Spaniards knew that British Admiral Rodney had also suffered great losses in the hurricane.

When arriving at Havana, the general and the admirals analyzed the situation and decided that they needed some time to get ready for the expedition again. Winter had arrived and they needed to take some time to refit and reorganize themselves. The final expedition would not set sail until February 1781.

Meanwhile, when General Campbell was informed about the effects of the hurricane on the Spanish troops, he organized a force to attack Mobile. Campbell chose Colonel Johan Haxleden, a charismatic leader, to lead the offensive. Mobile was running low on supplies, but the defense was well prepared. Gálvez took the actions needed to prepare it properly before leaving Mobile in March 1780. He installed a forward post named “The Village” in the eastern side of the bay to protect it from the attacks that could come from Pensacola. Colonel Ezpeleta was in command and he was an astute and experienced commander. With a defensive system based on trenches and four cannons he

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<sup>89</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 263.

<sup>90</sup> Figures taken from Carmen de Reparaz, *Yo Sólo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 155.



defeated at least three British attacks on The Village. During the last one, on 7 January 1781, Colonel Haxleden was killed. These victories increased the morale of the Spanish troops who were willing to seize Pensacola and recover West Florida for Spain.

### The Siege of Pensacola

As time passed and there were no results against Pensacola, King Carlos III sent Don Francisco Saavedra as personal emissary to promote the resumption of operations along the Gulf of Mexico. He was empowered with direct authority coming from the king to “explain the will of the king” and ensure the beginning of operations.<sup>91</sup> He arrived in Havana on 23 January 1781, contacted all the authorities and organized a series of “councils of war” to plan the expedition and solve the existing conflicts of interests among the authorities. Thus, the first council of war took place on 1 February. The first decision was to start the operation as soon as possible, because the stormy season was approaching. The squadron and forces got ready and the first ships set sail the 28th of February.

Since the beginning, the authorities in Havana were reluctant to support the operations and attempted to delay them because they feared an attack on Havana, and did not want to leave it unprotected. They did not understand the audacity needed during war and were not as aggressive as Don Bernardo de Gálvez. In fact, General Gálvez felt that the build up of the forces could delay the operation, so he preferred to proceed with the attack with the forces at hand, rather than delay it again, because the summer would arrive soon. This would hinder the operations because of the prevalence of infectious

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<sup>91</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 273.

diseases in the area. But, he found in Saavedra his best ally to solve the scarcity of forces he was dealing with, because Saavedra had promised him some reinforcements and he was able to supply them, arriving in time for the decisive operation.

On the other hand, the impasse would have been resolved in any case. Don José de Gálvez, Minister of Indias, having received the first reports from Saavedra decided to relieve the commanders in Havana.<sup>92</sup> But the letters with this news arrived at Havana very late after Pensacola had already surrendered.

Pensacola was strongly defended and Gálvez estimated since the beginning he needed more than 7,000 men to defeat the enemy, including land and naval forces. In February 1781 he set sail with the forces he was able to gather in Havana. He planned to meet with other forces coming from New Orleans and Mobile. Gálvez set sail from Havana on 28 February 1781 with 32 boats and 3,179 men. Coming from New Orleans there was a convoy with 19 boats and 1,627 men.<sup>93</sup> A third expedition led by Colonel Ezpeleta arrived on foot from Mobile with approximately 900 men.<sup>94</sup> Later on, Saavedra would provide him some reinforcements. Thus, he arrived in April with a total of 1,600 Spaniards and 800 French soldiers under the command of Field Marshal Juan Manuel de Cagigal. Therefore, Gálvez finally achieved his initial troop requirements with over 7,000 men.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>93</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 68.

<sup>94</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 277.

The forces he gathered were a great mixture of regular soldiers from different Spanish regiments, some French forces, creoles, local militias, and some Indians. But, in general, he only employed the Indians to get information, provide supplies, and convince other Indians not to take part in the conflict.

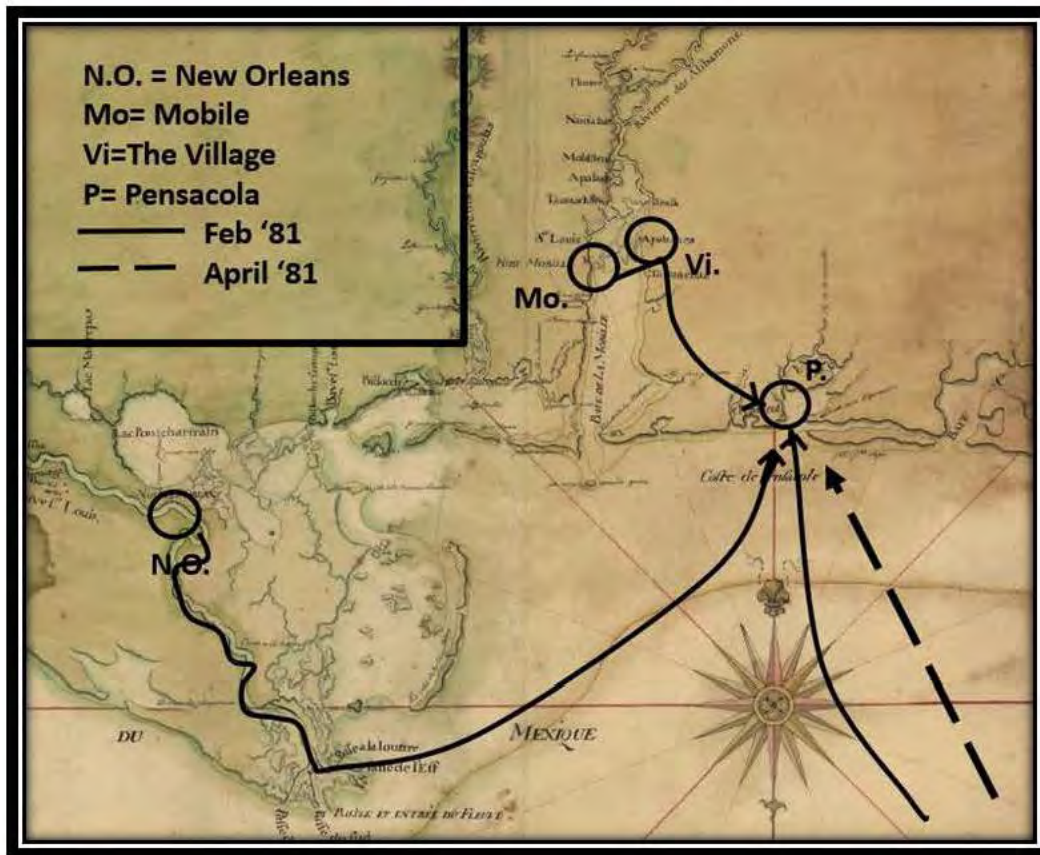


Figure 3. The Siege of Pensacola

Source: Library of Congress.

Figure 3 illustrates the gathering of the different forces in time and space. Don Bernardo de Gálvez began the operations and gathering of forces in October 1780. Finally, despite the problems he faced in gathering the forces, he was able to coordinate

the three expeditions in February 1781 and received the last reinforcements in April 1781.

The siege of Pensacola is probably the most famous battle of the Spanish intervention in the American Revolutionary War. Pensacola was strategically relevant because it dominated the Gulf of Mexico and was strongly fortified. The concept of the operation consisted of several phases. Initially, the general seized Saint Rosa Island to allow naval forces access into the bay. When the forces from New Orleans arrived, he left forces on the island and crossed to the opposite shore to link up with the forces coming by land. Finally, he organized them all and prepared for the ground siege. Then, he advanced towards the enemy's forts establishing several encampments and building trenches to attack with artillery fire and finally assault the forts. Most of the facts related in this chapter are taken from Gálvez's diary of operations against Pensacola.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> There is an abstract of the diary of operations available online, accessed February 8, 2015, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United\\_States/Louisiana/\\_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez\\_Diary\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/Louisiana/_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez_Diary*.html).

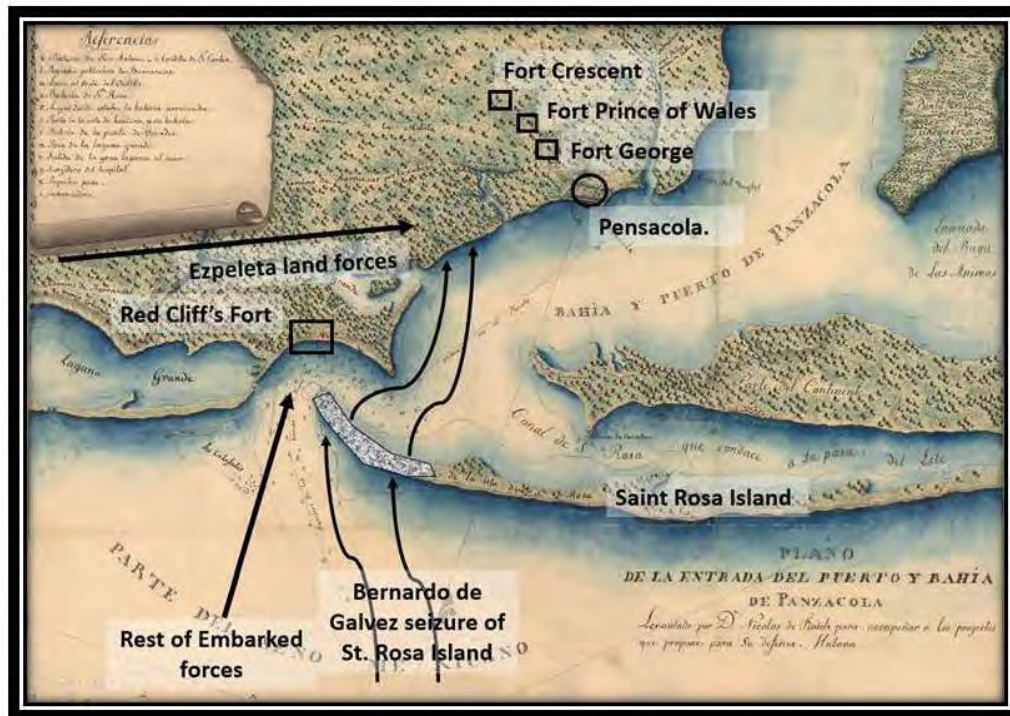


Figure 4. Detail of the Concept of Operations for the Siege

Source: Instituto de Historia y Cultura Militar, Madrid.

In accordance with his Diary of Operations, Gálvez set sail from Havana on 28 February. A schooner had already been sent with orders to coordinate the arrival of the troops from New Orleans. Initially, the general's plan was to pick up Ezpeleta's forces and sail all together towards the Bay of Pensacola, but he changed his mind and went directly to the Bay. Thus, the 1st of March, another schooner was sent to order the forces in Mobile led by Ezpeleta, to march by land towards Pensacola and meet there with the rest of the expedition. The 4th of March, the field marshal held a meeting with all the war vessels' commanders, to inform them about his intent to enter the bay. His plan was to disembark in Saint Rose Island, attack the enemy's battery on the west side of the island

(Sigüenza Point) and facilitate the entry of the ships in the port.<sup>96</sup> This way, the Spanish forces would avoid the cross fire the enemy could create from this battery and Red Cliff's Fort placed in the opposite shore.

On the morning of the 9th of March, the squadron sighted the Saint Rose Island. The British frigates protecting the bay detected the Spanish forces and fired to report the enemy presence. However, the forces landed that evening without opposition. They arrived at Sigüenza Point on 10 March at 5 a.m. and seized the area where some cannons and fortification material were found. There was nobody there, but a while later, two boats with British soldiers were discovered coming to the battery and captured. Meanwhile, a British brig set sail from Pensacola to Jamaica with a request from General Campbell for reinforcements.<sup>97</sup> The prisoners informed the general about the reinforcements requested to Jamaica.

Once in Saint Rose Island, the forces established a battery in barbettes to disrupt the British frigates in the harbor and protect the Spanish forces. The general ordered to sound the shallow sandbar of the harbor, and the squadron tried to enter the bay on 11 March, but the "San Ramon"<sup>98</sup> touched the bottom when crossing the bar and the convoy

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<sup>96</sup> Diary of Operations, accessed February 8, 2015, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United\\_States/Louisiana/\\_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez\\_Diary\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/Louisiana/_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez_Diary*.html), 48.

<sup>97</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 65.

<sup>98</sup> "San Ramon" was the leading ship of the squadron and the commander of the naval forces was its commander.

was stranded outside the bay.<sup>99</sup> During the next days, they lightened the ships, but the weather did not allow the convoy to cross the bar. The general understood there was too much delay, and he feared the strong wind could compel the naval forces to sail leaving the ground forces isolated. Additionally, on 16 March he learned that the forces coming by land from Mobile were arriving, so the general “determined to be the first one to force the harbor, in the conviction that his example resort would stimulate the others to follow him.”<sup>100</sup> On 18 March, the general crossed the bar with the only two vessels under his private orders, giving an example to the rest of the squadron and earning the motto “I alone” for posterity.<sup>101</sup> The rest of the squadron followed him and crossed the next day, except the “San Ramon,” which returned to Havana.

Since the general entered the bay, generals Gálvez and Campbell attempted to negotiate the stipulations for the campaign for West Florida.<sup>102</sup> Gálvez had always tried to keep out the Indians from the fight but Campbell had refused to do it.<sup>103</sup> The Indians

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<sup>99</sup> Diary of Operations, accessed February 8, 2015, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United\\_States/Louisiana/\\_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez\\_Diary\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/Louisiana/_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez_Diary*.html), 49.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>101</sup> Carlos III authorized to include the Brig “Gálveztown” with the motto “I alone” in Gálvez’s coat of arms. Reparaz, *Yo Sólo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 22.

<sup>102</sup> Diary of Operations, accessed February 8, 2015, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United\\_States/Louisiana/\\_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez\\_Diary\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/Louisiana/_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez_Diary*.html), 55.

<sup>103</sup> Chavez, *España Y La Independencia De Estados Unidos*, 270.

were uncivilized and were known for their extreme cruelty in combat.<sup>104</sup> During the exchange of letters, Gálvez tried to minimize the consequences of the conflict on the civilians and to comply strictly with the customs and laws of war of the time. General Campbell seemed to agree to this in his letters, but on the other hand, following the same tactics he had employed in Mobile with the population, he burned some houses in the vicinity of Red Cliff's Fort. The mail exchange continued, but this fact changed significantly the tone of communication between the two generals.

On 22 March, Colonel Ezpeleta was seen on the other side of the harbor, so Gálvez provided him 500 men to provide security and give them a rest. The next day the convoy from New Orleans arrived at Saint Rose Island and the day was employed to get everything ready to cross to the other shore. Finally, on 24 March, all the troops encamped in Saint Rose Island crossed to the other side and met with Ezpeleta's troops to begin the siege.

Since the Spanish troops arrived to the western shore, they suffered ambushes and skirmishes from the Indians which sometimes were supported by British regular troops. The Spanish counter-attacked these skirmishers maneuvering with light infantry and even artillery when the attack was prolonged. They spent much effort in defending themselves, clearing the woods, digging trenches, and protecting their camps with fascines. They avoided a fight with the Indians in the woods where the Indians proved to be very effective. The Spanish general was always aware of the importance of the Indians in this war, who were usually allied to the British. He tried to minimize their effectiveness by trying to influence them with other Indians. So, when the Indians from the Talapuz

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<sup>104</sup> They frequently scalped the bodies of their victims.



Nation arrived at the Spanish camp, Gálvez persuaded them to do two tasks: to provide fresh meat for the troops, and to persuade the Indians on the British side not to take part in the fight.<sup>105</sup>

Another relevant fact during the siege was the influence of deserters. The British had many more deserters than the Spanish and they were a good source of intelligence. There were also some deserters from the Spanish troops, and Gálvez had to task some companies of light infantry to prevent desertion.

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<sup>105</sup> Indian tribe from Saint Augustine of Florida, which were under Spanish control before the Seven Years' War.



Figure 5. Detail of the Siege of Pensacola

*Source:* Map taken from James Larry, “Hidden Vestiges: An Approach To Recognizing An 18th Century Historic Landscape Within An Urban Environment.” Source of the map: courtesy of the William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Figure 5 illustrates the different encampments, forts, trenches and engineer works executed during the siege. There were four forts in Pensacola. Red Cliff’s Fort was the one covering the access to the bay from the Western shore. Defending the city of Pensacola there were other three forts. Fort George was the main one and had two redoubts in the south. To the north there were also two other forts named Fort Prince of Wales and Fort Crescent. This last one was named Fort Crescent because of its shape and it was the one the Spanish chose to attack first. During the siege, the Spanish tried to get

close to the three eastern forts in Pensacola, and to seize some advantageous point in the terrain from which they could launch their attack. They moved along the west flank of the forts and finally were able to move into several advantageous positions from which they could attack Fort Crescent with artillery, mortars, and howitzers.

During the siege, the Spanish had to move their camp several times. On 12 April, during one of these camp movements, the Spanish were attacked and General Gálvez was seriously wounded when he was in one of the forward batteries repelling the attack. Moreover, a tempest of rain impacted the hospital tent where he was, and many wounded died of convulsions. The expedition feared what could happen to the general which demonstrates the great moral influence Gálvez enjoyed because of his personal leadership qualities.<sup>106</sup>

On 18 April, the mail arrived with good news from Guatemala, where the president of Guatemala, Don Matías de Gálvez had dislodged the British from the castle of Nicaragua. The general ordered the heavy artillery to fire and spread the news to every man in the army. This psychological tactic was also employed by the British, who celebrated Cornwallis' victories against the Americans and explained it to the Spanish with his emissary carrying the mail the next morning.<sup>107</sup>

On 19 April, the siege continued with the trenches getting closer to Fort Crescent when more than twenty ships came into sight of the harbor. It was Saavedra with the

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<sup>106</sup> Diary of Operations, accessed February 8, 2015, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United\\_States/Louisiana/\\_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez\\_Diary\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/Louisiana/_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez_Diary*.html), 65.

<sup>107</sup> Cornwallis was the British General conducting operations in the South of the American theater.

reinforcements. Saavedra had promised Gálvez reinforcements to complement his forces in Pensacola. But it was not easy. On the one hand, the authorities in Havana feared not having enough forces to defend the island in case of British attack. On the other hand, the French authorities, who were responsible to provide security in the Caribbean Sea in accordance with the third Family Compact with Spain, feared an attack on the French colonies. Thus, although the commander of the French Fleet, Admiral François Aymar de Monteil, was in Havana in March 1781, he preferred to set sail to protect his colonies rather than to assist Gálvez.<sup>108</sup>

Fortunately for the Spanish expedition, on 7 April news arrived in Havana concerning some British ships that had been sighted in Saint Antonio Cape.<sup>109</sup> The authorities in Havana believed they were British reinforcements for Pensacola and they finally agreed to provide reinforcements to the Spanish expedition. Saavedra disembarked in Pensacola the 21st of April. He arrived with Admiral Monteil commanding the French forces and Admiral Solano, who commanded the fleet consisting of 12 Spanish and eight French ships. Field Marshall Juan Manuel Cagigal commanded the embarked land troops with 1,600 Spaniards and 800 French. As soon as they disembarked, Gálvez reorganized his troops with the reinforcements and continued the siege.

On 28 April, the engineers began to construct a covered road towards a hill located north of the Fort Crescent, from which they could install mortars and cannons. It

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<sup>108</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 137.

<sup>109</sup> Western side of Cuba Island.

was very important not to be discovered when building the fortifications, so they worked even during the night on several occasions. Despite these precautions, the enemy discovered the new trench on 29 April, when the Spanish were still improving it. During the next days, the digging of siege trenches continued and on 3 May, the distance from the trench to the Fort Crescent was only 500 meters. The trench was quite well fortified, and contained several redoubts.<sup>110</sup> On 5 May, the British successfully attacked the new position and burned the trench causing a total of 44 killed and wounded.<sup>111</sup> When Ezpeleta arrived with his troops to support the surprised forces, the enemy had already gone. He observed the cruelty the British employed during the attack since they had looted the killed and wounded men.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, Solano and Cagigal had been planning the naval bombing of Fort George. The bombing was not decisive but it was helpful. Their plan was presented to Gálvez on 2 May and it was accepted. It never happened, because the next days, a hard storm hit the area and prevented this.

When Gálvez received the report of the disaster in the trench, he decided to teach the enemy a lesson. Fort Crescent was already strongly damaged and he prepared an assault for 7 May. The plan was to assault this fort just before day break. During the execution, the assault forces did not arrive in time. Thus, Ezpeleta suggested cancelling the assault and Gálvez accepted the suggestion.

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<sup>110</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 174.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 177-178.

On 8 May, Fort Crescent renewed its fire in the early morning, but the batteries from the Spanish redoubts and the trench counter fired so successfully that the powder magazine blew up with 105 men of the garrison.<sup>113</sup> In this situation, the general ordered an assault to exploit the success and attacked the fort with two columns. The first one was led by Brigadier General Giron with 780 men from the trench, and the second with 950 men who were at the time off-duty under the command of General Ezpeleta.<sup>114</sup> The fort was partially destroyed, but the artillery the enemy had added to the fort in the flanks remained untouched.<sup>115</sup>

The Spanish forces assaulted Fort Crescent but the British retired to Fort Prince of Wales. As soon as they arrived at the remaining ruins of the Fort Crescent, the attackers emplaced howitzers and cannons and attacked the Prince of Wales redoubt. The British resistance was heavy and they fired intensively from both Fort George and Prince of Wales. In this moment, Field Marshall Cagigal suggested to Gálvez that he order the naval commanders to support with fires on the Fort George, but there was no time for the frigates to maneuver and execute it.<sup>116</sup>

The exchange of fire continued and finally, the British ceased fire at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Then, a white flag appeared in Fort George. At the same time Campbell

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<sup>113</sup> Diary of Operations, accessed February 8, 2015, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United\\_States/Louisiana/\\_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez\\_Diary\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/America/United_States/Louisiana/_Texts/LHQ/1/1/Gálvez_Diary*.html), 74.

<sup>114</sup> Reparaz, *Yo Solo: Bernardo De Gálvez Y La Toma De Panzacola En 1781: Una Contribución Española a La Independencia De Los Estados Unidos*, 193.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 196.

sent 300 men of his troops to Georgia and some Indians left. The British general initially attempted to negotiate a cease-fire, but Gálvez refused to it and finally, on 9 May the capitulation was signed. The Spanish took possession of every fort in Pensacola and the campaign was over. Gálvez in his diary of operations accounts for taking 1,347 prisoners and suffering a total of 96 killed in action and 202 wounded. With the capitulation of General Campbell, Field Marshall Gálvez had gained West Florida for Spain and had secured the so called “Spanish Flank” of the American Revolution.

Later on, Field Marshall Don Bernardo de Gálvez would achieve further successes for both the Kingdom of Spain and the American Revolution. He provided decisive support to France and the American rebels that made possible their victory at the siege of Yorktown.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, he captured the Bahama Islands in 1782.<sup>118</sup> But these and other episodes fall out of the scope of this thesis.

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<sup>117</sup> In Yorktown the British forces led by Cornwallis were defeated. It was the battle that led the war to the end. Chavez, *España y la independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 287.

<sup>118</sup> After the war, Bahama Island was exchanged with the British for East Florida. Thus, after the war, Spain regained both Floridas. Chavez, *España y la independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 303-304.

## CHAPTER 4

### CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the campaign to discover the challenges Don Bernardo de Gálvez faced. The analysis also demonstrates the ways the general employed to overcome those challenges. Some of those methods or techniques are related to specific situations which occurred in this particular campaign and will not be applicable to other situations. But others can be applicable to other situations and operational environments, and they constitute useful lessons for practitioners of military art and science.<sup>119</sup>

The methodology employed to identify the challenges is an analysis of the campaign employing some of the current techniques and concepts from military art and science as expressed in current US doctrine. Beginning with a short description of the strategic context, the campaign will be analyzed with the most general concepts, ideas and elements of operational art and design. This analysis will provide a better understanding and visualization of the campaign. Finally, a short analysis of the most relevant considerations at the tactical level will follow.

The method employed to demonstrate how General Gálvez overcame the challenges is historical analysis. During this chapter, both the challenges and the methods employed to overcome them will be presented together. Later on, in chapter 5, a synthesis will follow, identifying the most relevant methods and techniques General Gálvez

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<sup>119</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations*, (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 2011) definition for operational environment: “the composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander.”



applied; presenting them as conclusions and recommendations that could be applied in other operational environments. This analysis provides valuable examples to practitioners of military art and science.

### Analysis of the Campaign

#### Strategic Level Considerations

The consequences of the Seven Years' War clearly altered the equilibrium among the main powers of the world. For France and Spain, the Seven Years' War ended with the Treaty of Paris, which represented a victory for the British and a defeat for France and Spain, which lost some important territories. Both nations could not stay indifferent before the instability created by the American Revolution, which represented an opportunity to recover some of their territories and reestablish a better strategic position for their interests.

The national strategic end for Spain was to recover some territories for the empire, taking advantage of the opportunity the American Revolutionary War represented. But the way to achieve this end was not necessarily a war against the British. There were two possible ways. One was the war, and the other was an alliance between Spain and the United Kingdom setting some favorable conditions, which could also satisfy the Spanish aspirations. Spain considered seriously both ways—the war and the alliance—to achieve her end and there were some attempts to achieve these goals through diplomacy before declaring war. Thus, prior to the outbreak hostilities, there were diplomatic efforts between the Spanish and the British Kings to find a mutual agreement with a military alliance favorable to both kingdoms. However, the question of the status of Gibraltar made the agreement impossible because its possession was non-negotiable

for both nations and left no room for the alliance. Once Spain realized the alliance was not possible, she decided to declare war. But, ambiguity was kept until the end, and it affected both Gálvez and the Minister of the Indies who had to deal with this incertitude while providing supplies to the colonies and preparing clandestinely for a possible campaign.

The information analyzed proves that Spain initially had two main national strategic objectives: to regain possession over Gibraltar and of Minorca.<sup>120</sup> Once the war started, Spain would fight against the United Kingdom in many other theaters of operations including Europe, the Atlantic Ocean, Central America and finally North America. In the North American theater, and during the American Revolutionary War, the Gálvez family played a decisive role in defense of Spanish strategic interests. Don José de Gálvez was the Minister of the Indies (1775 to 1787) with responsibility over all the Spanish territories in the American continent. His brother Matías defeated the British attempts to invade the Mosquito Coast (in what is present-day Nicaragua) and, finally, Don Bernardo de Gálvez (son of Don Matías) took care of the British in his area of operations around the Gulf of Mexico. Gálvez responsibilities were critical because the British presence in Mobile and Pensacola represented a threat to New Orleans, the key entrance to the Mississippi River and the interior of the continent.<sup>121</sup>

The purpose of Field Marshal Gálvez in his campaign in Florida was to eliminate the British threat and recover Florida for Spain. The theater strategic objectives for

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<sup>120</sup> Utrilla, *España ante la independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 138.

<sup>121</sup> The area of operations included the Spanish Louisiana, the West Florida and the Gulf of Mexico.

General Gálvez were to protect the Spanish territories in Louisiana, to oppose and overthrow the British from any threatening location, to establish a new Spanish government in West Florida and to gain influence in the area with the American rebels. The operational level analysis explains how the Spanish general understood, visualized, directed, and led his campaign to achieve these objectives.

### Operational Level

The operational level is the main focus of analysis for the campaign. It includes the general considerations of the environment, the operational design, the study of the forces, and finally, the operational approach General Gálvez employed to defeat the British. The analysis of these elements allows us to understand the challenges he faced and the ways to overcome them. The study of the operational environment and the operational design is the basis to understand the campaign.

#### Operational Environment General Considerations and Operational Design

The physical environment in which the campaign took place was very particular and had great impact on the operations. Louisiana and West Florida were vast territories with a very limited population. The quantity of forces deployed could not control such extensive area and had to focus on the forts to control the terrain because these forts were located in key terrain. This is the reason why the fights were always centered in the capture of the forts, which were the decisive points because they provided a clear military advantage. Additionally, the environment was very unhealthy. This fact was especially remarkable in the coastal areas. Thus, diseases caused great numbers of casualties, not only in the cities along the Gulf of Mexico like Mobile and Pensacola, but also in other

locations where troops were stationed, like Cuba or Jamaica. The weather and hurricanes significantly hindered mobility, and the forces were especially exposed to these risks in some periods and seasons during the year.

From an operational perspective, the Mississippi River is the most remarkable physical element in the vast North American continent, because it is a key line of communications to the interior. The Mississippi was strategically significant during the American Revolutionary War, because the British had blocked trade along the Atlantic Ocean and it became the main route of supplies for the American rebels. Additionally, there was not much infrastructure to enable communications and movement by land was slow and difficult. Thus, whenever possible, military forces chose to travel and transport material by sea or by river because the communications by land suffered from delays and were not very reliable. Command and control was exerted by means of written orders and it took a lot of time for these orders to arrive to their destination, especially when crossing the ocean.

The socio-political environment was complex and it represented a challenge. There was diversity in the population: local settlers of both French and Spanish ancestry, some British settlers, Indians, and creoles of various origins. Despite this diversity, the exercise of influence with the population was key to obtain intelligence, build militias, and ensure a good transition to peace once the conflict ended. In the Spanish territories, the governor was also the military commander. This represented both an opportunity and a challenge. This was not the case in the British territories, where the governor was different from the military commander. On the other hand, the American Revolution was spreading to the south and its impact was another factor to consider in the operational

environment. It could represent either an opportunity for cooperation or a challenge, because the revolution could become contagious and threaten the interests of the colonial powers in their territories, including those of Spain.

From a military perspective, it is interesting to summarize the initial situation of the forces in the theater. The Spanish army's footprint in the theater was very small until reinforcements arrived during the summer of 1781. The British army was much bigger but was mainly focused in fighting the rebels in the northern colonies until 1781 when Cornwallis received the order to fight the colonists in the Carolinas and Georgia. Finally, the recently created Continental army was very small in comparison to the British army. It consisted of very motivated rebels, but they often lacked the means to fight and they were very dependent on Spanish and French supplies. Nevertheless, their effectiveness was improving very quickly, especially after the Battle of Saratoga. Spanish coordination with the Continental Army was key to the success of both. For example, Captain Pickle's actions in the Mississippi River supported Gálvez's major operation in the Mississippi; and later on, the Continental army's diversionary operations in Georgia helped deny the British capability to obtain reinforcements and was key for the success in the Spanish conquest of Pensacola.

Because of the uncertainties created by the socio-political situation and the military goals of the campaign, audacity became a decisive factor in the art of command. It may be argued that surprising the enemy before he could get reinforced was key to the success of General Gálvez's operations. It proved to be key during these operations, especially because of the need for economy of forces and the difficulty in getting reinforcements.

General Gálvez was the governor of Louisiana and the military commander executing the operation. Thus, he had to deal with the operational environment in the region and to develop a successful operational design for the campaign. He had to frame and identify the most relevant conditions at the beginning of the campaign, the conditions for the desired end state, the problem and obstacles that could impede the achievement of those conditions, and finally, the approach employed to overcome the problem and achieve the end state.

The initial conditions in the region were unstable because the British owned West Florida and they, with the support of some Native Americans and popular militias threatened Louisiana's main cities (St. Louis and New Orleans) while the American Revolutionary War was extending through the continent to the west and to the south. The British were fighting the rebels in several fronts and the Spanish were supporting the American rebels with great quantities of supplies through the Mississippi River. Additionally, the revolutionary ideology was dangerous in the eyes of the Spanish military and civilian leaders because it could have potential influence on other Spanish areas and even in Spain.

The conditions of the desired end state for Spain would consist of the conquest of West Florida, ensuring the security of the Spanish territories in America while providing economic benefits for Spain by continuing the trade in tobacco, textiles and mineral resources. It implied the stabilization the Gulf of Mexico and securing the main cities of New Orleans and St. Louis which seemed to be threatened by the British. It was also desirable to minimize the influence of the revolutionary ideas on Spanish controlled

areas. Finally, it would be desirable to establish good relations with the American colonies which would become neighbors and trading partners.

At the campaign level, the main problem was that the British army threatened the Spanish territories and her interests. More precisely, the possibility of British attacks from the north and from the east on the main cities of St. Louis and New Orleans, and the threat of spreading the instability into the Spanish areas. The way to overcome these problems and obstacles to achieve the desired end state was to design an operational approach.

The operational approach ordered by the Court in Madrid was initially limited to providing clandestine support of the American revolution and to control navigation in the Mississippi River. When the British threat increased with the Spanish declaration of war, the approach shifted to a military intervention in order to ensure security in the Spanish territories, secure the Mississippi River, occupy West Florida, recover it for Spain, and gain Spanish influence in the area with the rebels and the locals.

Once war was declared, General Gálvez decided that, in order to achieve his strategic end state, he had to protect the Spanish cities, to supply the American rebels, to capture the British forts along the Mississippi river, to block the enemy navigation on the Mississippi River, to deny the enemy freedom of movement in the Caribbean Sea, and to capture, occupy and transition Mobile and Pensacola to Spanish control. These operational objectives implied the defeat of British army and the recovery of West Florida for Spain. In order to achieve these objectives, the availability and status of the forces both friendly and enemy was key to achieve the ends.

### Analysis of Forces

Obviously, the status, composition, capabilities and morale of the opposing forces are one of the key elements in every campaign, major operation, battle or engagement. The analysis of the forces employed during the campaign, and more specifically, the requirements needed to succeed and the vulnerabilities of those forces, are very useful to understand the challenges the general faced during his campaign.

One of the most useful concepts to analyze a force at the operational level is that of centers of gravity.<sup>122</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz refers to it as “the hub of all power and movement.”<sup>123</sup> Recently, Colonel Dale C. Eikmeier defines it as “the source of power that creates a force or a critical capability that allows an entity to act or accomplish a task or purpose.”<sup>124</sup> In accordance with these definitions, Gálvez’s land forces were the Spanish operational center of gravity because they possessed the most relevant critical capabilities needed to achieve the end state, while the rest of the forces supported it. The quantity of Gálvez’s land forces was variable through the campaign, but in general, the forces consisted of a mixture from the Fixed Regiment of the Spanish Army in Louisiana, pro-Spanish militias from Louisiana, Indians and Spanish reinforcements from Cuba, reinforcements from Spain and some American rebels from the area.<sup>125</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>122</sup> The military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz introduce this term for the first time in his book *On War* in 1832.

<sup>123</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 595.

<sup>124</sup> Dale C. Eikmeier, “Center of Gravity Analysis,” *Military Review* (July 2004).

<sup>125</sup> The fixed regiments were units located in certain cities with the purpose of enlisting locals to defend those cities.



other forces of the Continental Army coordinated via observers took on the role of diverting the British and supported Gálvez's forces.

The total abilities or critical capabilities required to accomplish the campaign objectives were to protect territory, capture the British forts, defeat the British army in the region, stabilize and secure the area, and gain influence over the area. The conditions, resources and means (critical requirements) the forces needed to achieve those capabilities were the ability to generate sufficient combat power, and to exercise effective command and control. To do this, a significant amount of engineer and artillery forces were needed, as well as naval support in order to establish secure lines of communications through the Mississippi River and the Caribbean Sea. Other critical resources included adequate logistics, popular support, time to get ready, and the intelligence to properly plan the operations.

Those resources, conditions, and means, presented some vulnerabilities which are relevant to the analysis of the challenges faced by Gálvez. The most critical vulnerabilities were to secure adequate logistics, exercise effective command and control over the diversity of forces—applied in a similar way to today's mission command philosophy,—maintenance of good troop morale, and minimizing the impact of the weather, disease, and unsanitary conditions in the camps.<sup>126</sup> Also important were maintenance of the lines of communications, guarding against the possibility of sea interdiction, gaining and maintaining support from the population. Other challenges

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<sup>126</sup> The US Army doctrine defines Mission Command Philosophy in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission*, as “exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.”

included the limited combat power available to control all the area, and the limited time available to execute the operations because of the weather patterns and the prevalence of disease.

The set of concepts mentioned above are fundamental to an operational analysis of the forces in a campaign. Today this is known as critical factor analysis of a force.<sup>127</sup>

Table 1 shows this analysis of the forces under Gálvez's command.

Table 1. Friendly Forces Critical Factors Analysis

<b>Critical Capabilities</b> <u>Protect</u> the territory <u>Capture</u> British forts <u>Defeat</u> the British army in the region <u>Stabilize</u> and <u>secure</u> the area <u>Gain influence</u> in the area	<b>Center of Gravity</b>  Theater strategic: All forces in theater Operational: Galvez's land forces
<b>Critical Requirements</b> Sufficient Combat power Command and control Engineers and Artillery Naval support Secured LOCs (river and sea) Transport (ships) Logistics Popular support Time to get ready Intelligence	<b>Critical Vulnerabilities</b> Limited combat power to secure area Logistics Command and control Troop morale (environnement cond.) Extension of LOCs Sea interdiction MC philosophy exercise Lack of population support in some places Limited time

Source: Created by author.

<sup>127</sup> Dr. Joe Strange developed this technique which is currently widely accepted to analyze a force from an operational perspective. Jack D. Kem, *Planning for Action: Campaign Concepts and Tools* (Fort Leaveworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015), 179.

This analysis is not only relevant to the Spanish forces. Some of the challenges General Gálvez faced during his campaign also applied to British capabilities, conditions, resources and means.

For the British, the operational center of gravity was the land, British forces that could defend the province, resist the Spanish invasion, and protect the government of the British province. These forces consisted of the garrisons of the different forts along the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, other garrisons in West Florida, pro-British militias, and especially, the expeditionary army of General Campbell, which included a considerable quantity of irregular indigenous forces.

The abilities required by British forces (critical capabilities) to accomplish their mission were to defend the forts in the Mississippi River, Mobile and Pensacola, to defeat the Spanish invasion, to control the territory, resources and population, and to organize and lead the resistance. The critical requirements to execute those capabilities were the trained, loyal and capable forces, arsenals and military supplies, forts prepared to resist sieges, naval support, reinforcement capabilities and an effective command and control system.

Fortunately for General Gálvez, the analysis of those requirements led to identify the following vulnerabilities: insufficient quantity of British forces, ill-defended forts, British lack of respect to the rules of law, extended and unsecured lines of communications, some ill-trained forces to perform some types of fight (the Indians were not capable of fighting in the western way of war), tactical deficiencies in the defense

(both batteries in the Pensacola Bay proved not to be effective), and the difficulty in obtaining reinforcements and resupply.

Table 2. Enemy Forces Critical Factors Analysis

Critical Capabilities	Center of Gravity
<u>Defend</u> the forts <u>Defeat</u> the Spanish invasion <u>Control</u> the territory, resources and population <u>Organize</u> and <u>lead</u> the resistance	Theater Strategic: British government in West Florida  Operational: British land forces in West Florida (General. Campbell's Army)
Critical Requirements	Critical Vulnerabilities
Trained, loyal and capable forces Arsenals and military supplies Forts prepared to resist sieges Naval support Reinforcement capabilities Effective command and control	Insufficient quantity of forces Ill-defended forts Lack of respect to the rules of law Extended and unsecured LOCs Some ill-trained forces for some types of fight (Indians) Tactical deficiencies in defense Difficult reinforcements and resupplies

*Source:* Created by author.

Table 2 illustrates the summary of the critical factors analysis for the British forces. The last element pending study is the operational approach employed, which can be explained in terms of lines of operations and decisive points.

### The Operational Approach: Lines of Operations and Decisive Points

The operational approach is the description of the broad actions the force must take to achieve the end state.<sup>128</sup> It is based on the understanding of the operational environment and of the strategic problem that must be solved. For this reason, the consideration of lines of effort and decisive points is the best way to analyze it, because the possession of the fortress as key terrain, and the position of one's own forces with respect to the enemy, are decisive military advantages needed to achieve the desired end state.<sup>129</sup>

Lines of effort define the orientation of the force in relation to the enemy. They also describe and connect a series of decisive actions that lead to control of a geographic or force-oriented objective.<sup>130</sup> In contrast, decisive points are the geographic places, specific key events, critical factors, or functions that allow a military force to gain a marked advantage in order to achieve success.<sup>131</sup> In the Gálvez campaign the lines of operations are related to the geographical movement of forces and the achievement of objectives while most of the decisive points are forts that controlled key terrain.

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<sup>128</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 2011), XX.

<sup>129</sup> Henri-Antoine Jomini was the first military theorist to employ the term lines of effort which remains applicable in today's conflict analysis.

<sup>130</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, III-27.

<sup>131</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 2011), GL-8.

Field Marshall Gálvez had to adapt his plans several times because of the problems he encountered in coordinating support with the authorities in Cuba. However, in order to analyze the challenges the general faced and the historical facts, I will focus not on the initially planned operational approach, but on the executed one which included the lines of effort described in figure 6, and the decisive points depicted in table 3 and figure 7.

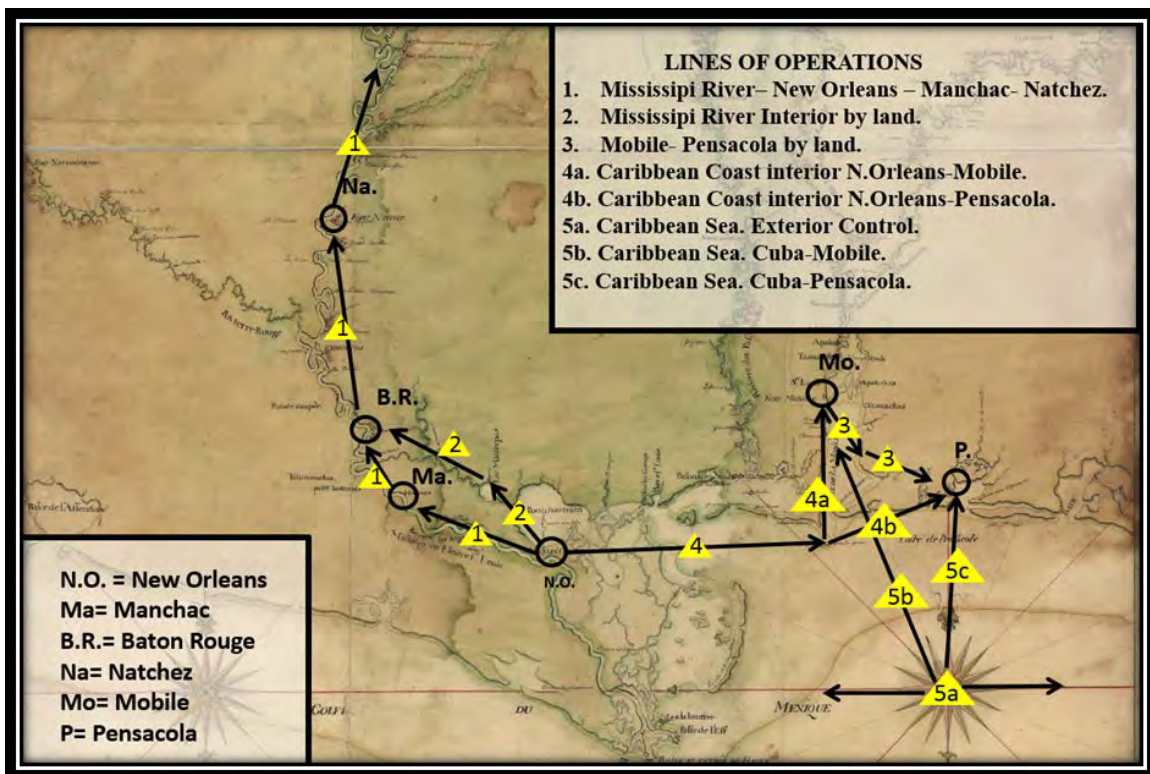


Figure 6. Lines of Operation in Gálvez's West Florida Campaign

Source: Library of Congress.

Table 3. Decisive Points and their Event—Function Relation during Gálvez’s Campaign to Regain West Florida

DECISIVE POINTS	
Identification	Event/Function
1. New Orleans	a. Population acceptance/Information
2. Mississippi Forts	b. Occupy
3. Main cities (Saint Louis, St Genoveva)	c. Population acceptance/information
4. St. Joseph	d. Destruction of ENY supplies/will
5. Mobile captured and secured.	e. Occupy/Info/Secure key terrain
6. Blockade of Mississippi River	f. Control supplies/trade
7. Blockade of Caribbean Sea.	g. Deny ENY reinforce
8. Capture Pensacola	h. Overthrow BR gov/Gain Province of West Florida

*Source:* Created by author.

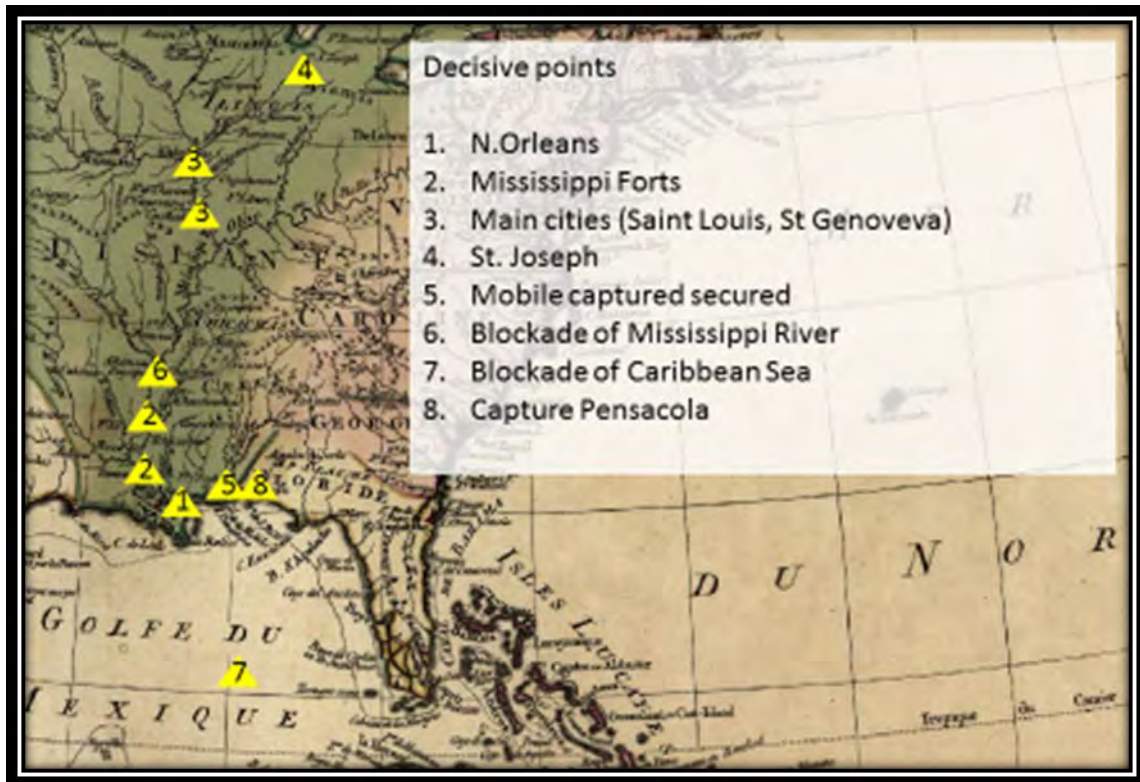


Figure 7. Decisive Points Location in the North-American Continent

Source: L'Amérique Septentrionale, Library of Congress of the United States of America, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3300.ar007601/>.

### Tactical Considerations

The end of 18th century was a time of limited war, where the results of war often depended on capturing fortresses. The way to defeat the forts was the employment of artillery to open a breach in the defenses and then, the employment of infantry to assault the fortress. So, commanders used engineers to dig trenches and artillery to open breaches. The ability to withstand the hard conditions of the siege was important, but the tactical preparation and the technical knowledge of how to use artillery and engineers were key elements for the success of siege operations.



Mobile, Pensacola and New Orleans were well prepared and protected cities. St. Louis, however, was not. There Fernando Leyba had to build Fort San Carlos in a hurry to better defend the city. The British outposts were generally well fortified, but some of them did not have enough garrison forces or supplies to overcome a siege. The forts on the Mississippi River were poorly supplied and did not have many forces protecting them. On the contrary, the forts in Pensacola were strongly fortified and prepared, but the batteries at the entrance of the bay from Red Cliff Fort and Saint Rose Island proved to be inefficient. The ones in the Red Cliff Fort were not properly located because of the height of the terrain, and the one in Saint Rose Island was not manned permanently. After the Pensacola conquest, a new and effective battery was placed by the Spanish at the entrance of the bay located at sea level.

Irregular warfare elements were very relevant during the war. The employment of local militias, especially Indians, which fought in a way that European armies were not used to, caused much trouble to the regular armies.

#### Analysis of Challenges General Gálvez faced and Methods he Employed to Overcome Them

##### Strategic Considerations

From the previous analysis, it is clear that during the preparation of the campaign there was no certitude about the strategic position Spain would adopt with respect to the British Kingdom. This uncertainty was a challenge and it limited the actions Gálvez could take. As a consequence, no aggressive actions could be taken before any declaration of war or clear guidance about the official Spanish policy had been received.

However, General Gálvez followed the King's orders to clandestinely support the rebels. Following the king's intent, he significantly increased the quantity of supplies to the American rebels. On the other hand, he considered that war against the British was the most likely strategic outcome and started preparations for the campaign with clandestine reconnaissance and intelligence gathering operations. This actions enabled him to conduct a major operation along the Mississippi River with such audacity that he totally surprised the British commanders in the forts, who did not even know about any declaration of war between Spain and the British Kingdom.

### Operational Environment Considerations

The operational environment was very challenging because of its physical characteristics and the socio-political situation. The most relevant physical challenges posed by the environment were the difficult terrain, the frequency of inclement weather, and the risk of contagious diseases. Additionally, the socio-political situation was demanding because of the possible influence the locals could have in the conflict. War demands adaptation, and General Gálvez's ability to lead properly and adapt his campaign and operational approach to the environment enabled Spanish interests to prevail in this campaign.

The terrain was difficult and hindered movement on foot. To solve this mobility challenge Gálvez's forces moved by boat whenever possible. His Fixed Regiment in Louisiana had some ships and the troops only moved on foot when it was strictly necessary. This decision helped his troops to maintain the morale and strength needed during combat. On the contrary, Campbell's expeditionary army moved by land. This

proved to have terrible consequences for the British in the defense of Mobile, because his troops arrived late and were physically unable to fight.

The weather was another challenge because hurricanes and storms devastated the forces. The effects of the weather were a random, uncontrollable factor in this campaign, but the ability to adapt was key. Thus, Gálvez decided to delay the operations several times because of the approaching stormy season. On the contrary, he experienced bad luck and had to withstand some hurricanes just before the start of the operations. But he always tried to take advantage of the situation by recovering his forces quickly. Since the enemy also suffered from the same natural disasters, his great leadership, will and bravery to gather and reorganize the forces could represent an advantage. This ability allowed him to surprise the enemy before he was able to recover.

The existence of infectious diseases and the unhealthy environment were also decisive factors. The Spanish commander took these facts into account and avoided operations in the most dangerous seasons, or encamping his forces for long periods of time in unhealthy places, and tried to minimize the impacts of diseases by building sanitary camps and hospital tents. However, the delay by the authorities in Cuba in sending reinforcements meant that a considerable percentage of the reinforcements coming from Spain got sick in Cuba before the fight.

The socio-political situation was also challenging. The double role of Bernardo de Gálvez as general and governor was an opportunity because it granted him unity of action at the military and political levels, as well as a great influence with the locals on his actions and decisions. On the contrary, the revolutionary mentality was expanding through the continent and he had to be very wary of its impact on the civilian population.

To overcome these challenges he proved his excellent leadership. He was very respectful of the laws and customs of war and demonstrated his commitment to the progress and well-being of the population. Moreover, he established and fostered good relations with the American rebels, and cooperated with them militarily since the beginning. Those relations provided great advantages to both sides at the military, political, and social levels. Finally, as we stated before, the forces in combat are a key element in every conflict, and many challenges can be identified from their analysis.

### Lessons from the Analysis of Forces

Some of the challenges General Gálvez faced can be deduced from the analysis of the friendly forces, and more specifically from their vulnerabilities. I am going to focus on those which were most relevant because they had the potential to cause a deeper impact on the operations. The initial limited combat power, the complex command and control structure, the lack of support experienced from the authorities in Havana, the difficult logistics, and the initial lack of intelligence were important challenges that needed to be mastered.

Spanish forces were scarce in the beginning. Initially, General Gálvez only had the approximately 500 regular soldiers from the Fixed Regiment of Louisiana while he estimated the need of about 7,000 soldiers to accomplish his objectives and recover West Florida. He adjusted the operational design by economizing his forces, as in the Mississippi River operation. Meanwhile, he exercised influence on the population, and encouraged the other commanders to do so. He organized as many militias as possible, while he requested reinforcements from the authorities in Cuba and Spain.

The command and control structure was complicated. General Gálvez commanded a large and complex coalition of more than 7,000 men which included a mix of land, naval, regular, and irregular forces from different nations and even speaking different languages. Additionally, in the beginning, he had no authority over the naval forces and the reinforcements from Cuba. For this reason, he could not execute his initial plan as it was conceived, attacking Pensacola directly after the conquest of Mobile. Later on, he was named commander in chief for all military operations in the American continent. But even then, he did not have authority over the naval component. In compensation, he enjoyed an excellent shared understanding with his subordinates and cooperated and collaborated effectively with all the actors in the theater. He provided effective leadership, enabled by his professional and social skills. His knowledge of the languages (Spanish and French), tactical procedures, cultural awareness, and the effective assignment of tasks to the different elements of the forces, enabled his forces to be efficient and perform at the highest level.<sup>132</sup>

However, General Gálvez experienced lack of support in the command and control structure from the authorities in Havana. This was one of the key challenges the general faced. History presents many other similar situations where the conflict of interests among several authorities hinders the achievement of higher objectives. As we have described, General Gálvez executed a kind of early application of today's mission command philosophy, and executed disciplined initiative to support the royal purposes of recovering West Florida, but he was frustrated time after time by the lack of support from

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<sup>132</sup> As stated before, he learned French in 1772 while posted in the Cantabria Regiment stationed in France.

the authorities in Havana. Nevertheless, he remained loyal to the king's purposes and always respected the chain of command. He persevered in his intent by sending his best emissary to solve the lack of support, contacted the authorities personally, and created a sort of coalition with Saavedra who became a key ally.<sup>133</sup> Finally, he provided a lesson in personal leadership when he crossed with his own boat the bar in the Pensacola Bay, earning the motto "I alone". His personal example not only enabled the continuation of the mission, but also empowered the morale of the troops.

Securing logistic support was another major challenge during the campaign and Gálvez overcame it with an innovative plan. An old military maxim states that an army marches on its stomach and, despite the fact that Gálvez's forces moved mainly by sea, they required food to ensure their combat power. Bernardo de Gálvez had fought the Apaches when he was stationed in Chihuahua and he had learned there how to organize a veritable travelling commissary.<sup>134</sup> Thus, just before the operations started, in order to feed his troops, he organized the first cattle drive out of Texas with the help of Texas governor Don Diego Cabello.<sup>135</sup> This line of supply worked so well that about 9,000 head of longhorn cattle were driven to Louisiana to feed the forces, as well as, several hundred horses from Texas to be employed for cavalry and artillery purposes.<sup>136</sup>

Finally, obtaining intelligence was another challenge in order to take advantage of time, audacity, and surprise. Despite the limitations implied by the strategic uncertainty,

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<sup>133</sup> Chavez, *España y la independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 274.

<sup>134</sup> Thonhoff, *The Texas Connection with the American Revolution*, 46.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

he established a diversified intelligence network and anticipated needed information. Thus, at his arrival to Louisiana, Gálvez sent Major Jacinto Panis commanding an expedition to gather information and to prepare plans for the seizure of the forts, and also, contacted the Indians, locals, American rebels, and the Spanish observers to gather information that could be useful for the campaign.

Furthermore, the British forces experienced great difficulties and their situation presented serious vulnerabilities. General Gálvez took advantage of it. The way he isolated the British army from any reinforcements or supplies and how he defeated the garrisons in the fortress, especially those who were well prepared, and defended was remarkable.

One of the most significant challenges Don Bernardo de Gálvez faced was the need to isolate British forces in West Florida. It was very important to deny the British reinforcements to keep a favorable combat power ratio because the Spanish forces had to carefully economize their forces during the campaign. The forces from Cornwallis' army or the Indian forces could jeopardize Gálvez's plans if they joined the campaign. But the general took the measures needed to avoid it. On the one hand, his aggressiveness and audacity were key at the operational level, denying the enemy any possibility to react in time and increase its combat power. On the other hand, he coordinated his actions with those of the others actors that could affect the possibility of enemy reinforcements. The coordination with the American rebels was key to divert Cornwallis' army, who kept fighting in Georgia and the Carolinas, while the coordination with some Indians tribes persuaded other tribes not to fight on the British side. Additionally, the general

exchanged correspondence with the British commanders in an attempt to persuade them to keep the Indians out of the conflict. But the agreement was not accepted.<sup>137</sup>

British naval capabilities were another factor that could seriously affect the development of the campaign. As we stated before, any movement by land was hard and slow and denying naval support would be a great advantage to the side that could do this. The Spanish operational approach enabled the control of the Mississippi River even before the British commanders knew they were in war against Spain. But the British navy controlled the Atlantic seaboard north of the Gulf of Mexico. Despite the fact that no evidence has been found about any coordination to deny the British naval support in the Caribbean Sea, it makes sense to think it existed between Gálvez and the Spanish and French admirals.

The preparation of the forts to resist the attacks or sieges was another challenge that General Gálvez had to overcome. As we shall see, Spanish forces demonstrated a clear superiority at the tactical and technical level, but at the operational level, the ability to control the tempo and audacity were key to surprise the enemy.<sup>138</sup>

### Tactical Considerations

From a tactical perspective, the way the British forces fought the battles and engagements made Spanish victory difficult to achieve. But the Spaniards demonstrated both tactical and technical superiority which enabled them to succeed. The British

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<sup>137</sup> Chavez, *España y la independencia de los Estados Unidos*, 269-270.

<sup>138</sup> ADRP 3-0 definition for the element of operational art tempo: “the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy.” Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012).



fortifications, irregular Indians tactics, and the achievement of surprise were some of the challenges Don Bernardo de Gálvez had to overcome at this level.

The Spanish forces employed combinations of techniques to capture the forts and defeat the enemy entrenched on them. Thus, the employment of diversionary operations and the clandestine work of the engineers digging trenches were tools employed to get close to the fortresses and open breaches in their walls. The suitable positioning of the cannons and howitzers, and their effective employment in combination with infantrymen allowed the attackers to succeed in the assault.

Indian tactics played also a relevant role in the battles. The British employed the Indians widely and especially in Pensacola. But the Spanish led forces were able to counter their irregular methods with a combination of engineers' work and the effective combination of movement and fire to pursue them. Clearing the forest to avoid Indians attacks and avoiding their type of war were keys for the success in the siege of Pensacola and the achievement of the campaign objectives.

Once the siege started, it was hard to achieve complete tactical surprise because of the static situation. Nevertheless, the Spaniards strived to get at least partial surprise. General Gálvez employed scouts widely to gather information for him and found in the British deserters a great source of intelligence. Conversely, he took the measures needed to deny the enemy any information about Spanish tactical disposition and intent.

By and large, the Spanish forces demonstrated superiority both in technical preparation and in tactical execution. The work of the Spanish engineers digging trenches and sounding the bar of the bay at Pensacola was very useful, as well as their assessment that the fires coming from the batteries in Red Cliff Fort would be ineffective. To

summarize, the proper positioning Spanish batteries, the use of diversionary tactics against the enemy, the experience of the commanders in previous wars fighting the Indians, and the tactical audacity employed enabled the Spaniards to achieve victory.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this chapter is to present a synthesis of the lessons from the Gálvez's campaign in Louisiana and West Florida. The Spanish general was able to understand the purpose of the campaign, as well as his enemy's abilities, and the operational environment. He applied many ways, methods, and techniques to overcome the challenges he faced, and some of the insights from his campaign can be adapted and applied in present and future conflicts. Finally, based on those lessons which constitute important and useful contributions to military art and science, I will provide some recommendations that could be applied to every conflict.

#### Synthesis of the Lessons from Gálvez's Campaign to Regain West Florida

General Gálvez set an example in many different areas. But in order to synthesize the lessons learned through the analysis of the campaign, we can organize them in four different areas: leadership, mission command, audacity and adaptation.

#### Leadership

Currently, there are multitude of studies defining the attributes and competencies desirable in military leaders. US Army doctrine identifies character, presence, and intellect as leader attributes and the ability to lead, develop others, and achieve success as leader competencies.<sup>139</sup> General Gálvez possessed these attributes and executed these

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<sup>139</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 1-6.

competencies. During this campaign he demonstrated excellent preparation, moral and physical courage, ability to influence, and respect for the rules of war. The application of these attributes was decisive for the successful achievement of the mission.

The excellent preparation of the General, concerning languages, tactical and technical knowledge, social skills, and his experience in previous wars allowed him to achieve the objectives of the campaign. Knowledge of the French language not only enabled him to coordinate effectively with the French allied forces in Pensacola, but also, to influence the population and succeed as governor in Louisiana, where most of the population spoke French because it was a former French province. On the other hand, in Florida there were still many Spanish-speakers and he could communicate with them in his native-language, while he counted with Mr. Oliver Pollock and the observers to deal with the Continental army and other English-speakers.

In the tactical and technical field, General Gálvez's forces mastered artillery and entrenchment techniques as shown during the sieges of Baton Rouge and Mobile, and with the building of the new post in The village. Even more importantly, was the accurate estimation of the enemy artillery's ineffectiveness from Red Cliffs Fort. As a consequence, the Spanish forces could cross the sand bar of the bay. Later, once the campaign was over, another battery was installed at the sea level to protect the bay's entrance in order to avoid the British mistake. The experience in previous wars, fighting against Indians and regular forces enabled the General to perform well at the tactical level and employ the appropriate leader competencies.

Don Bernardo de Gálvez proved his moral and physical courage and served as an example for his troops. On the one hand, despite of being wounded, he kept commanding

and performing at the highest level. On the other hand, he proved his moral courage when crossing the sand bar of the bay and setting an example of what is possible through bravery and courage to all the troops and commanders. This fact was very relevant, not only because he proved the feasibility of the operation, but also, because he bolstered the morale and cohesion of the forces with his example. The enduring lesson could be that in certain occasions, the chief must be the first to assume physical risks in order to enhance with his example the motivation, morale, and cohesion of the military forces.

The effective application of influence facilitated the success of the campaign. General Gálvez alleviated the scarcity of forces with the formation of pro-Spanish militias throughout the area. He also counted with the support of some Indians. But due to their brutal fighting techniques, he always tried to keep them out of the fight and only employ them for logistic purposes or to influence other Indians to persuade them to stay out of the fight. He was also respectful and sought to avoid any collateral damages on the population to win their hearts and minds and, moreover, also tried to influence the enemy soldiers by publicly celebrating every victory. The relevant lesson is that the increase in the quantity of forces through influence techniques was achieved through the adequate integration and proper assignment of tasks based on the capabilities available. US Army TRADOC doctrine writers are dealing with the idea of a new “engagement” warfighting function, and Don Bernardo de Gálvez, in his role both as General and governor of Louisiana set an example of what such a function might look like in its application.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Gary Sheftick, “TRADOC: Strategic Landpower Concept to Change Doctrine,” The Official Homepage of the United States Army, 16 January 2014, accessed April 7, 2015, [http://www.army.mil/article/118432/TRADOC\\_\\_Strategic\\_Landpower\\_concept\\_to\\_change\\_doctrine/](http://www.army.mil/article/118432/TRADOC__Strategic_Landpower_concept_to_change_doctrine/).

Another relevant insight from his leadership style was the creation of a positive environment which included a strict respect for the rules of war. This lesson is directly applicable to contemporary conflicts where military commanders usually need to assume some political and social responsibilities to foster stability in the areas of operations. The fair application and respect to the rules of war allowed the Spanish general to positively influence society and take advantage of intelligence and support from locals and other sources. For example, British deserters provided intelligence and locals provided support by forming militias. The command structure was so complex that the Spanish general had to complement his leadership abilities with the application of an early form of mission command to overcome the challenges.

### Mission Command

As stated before, General Gálvez dealt with a complex and challenging command and control structure to accomplish his mission. But he always figured out the way to optimize the contribution of the different forces and perform what may be interpreted as an early application of the mission command philosophy. General Gálvez gathered forces from different sources and was able to employ them effectively, assigning clear tasks to them and keeping good and effective communication with his subordinates, as well as with his superiors. His ability, knowledge, and experience in negotiation techniques, as well as the existence and establishment of some key relationships enabled him to succeed in the exercise of mission command eighteenth-century style.

During the siege of Pensacola, Don Bernardo de Gálvez was responsible for military operations commanding a mixture of more than 7,000 soldiers from different origins and speaking different languages. His command and control succeeded with this

complex force because he possessed excellent social skills, assigned clear tasks to the foreign forces, established positive climate, shared understanding, good relationship with his subordinates, and kept his most loyal commanders in key positions. Thus, the analysis of the history of the campaign demonstrates the special trust Gálvez had, and the care he took in assigning relevant roles during the campaign to Colonel Don José de Ezpeleta, who became later governor of Cuba in 1785.

But the most interesting lesson from Don Bernardo de Gálvez's application of mission command was the way he overcame the problems with the authorities in Havana. His superiors did not want to provide him the required support to accomplish his mission and follow the orders of the King Carlos III. Several lessons can be inferred from this situation. Despite the lack of agreement, Gálvez kept a sincere communication effort and persevered, devising better methods of communication. At first, he used ordinary mail, then he resorted to sending his best emissary—Colonel Ezpeleta—and finally, he went personally to reach an agreement. During the councils of war, General Gálvez mastered negotiation techniques and made an “alliance” with the empowered Saavedra to get the needed support. As a summary, the conflicts of interests in the chain of command could be resolved by improving communications and applying some basic negotiation techniques. However, these conflicts of interests did have an impact on Gálvez's initial plans and slowed down his plans.

## Audacity

General Gálvez initial plan depended on audacity<sup>141</sup> in its execution. Based on the intelligence and the understanding of the situation, the application of audacity provided him a great military advantage to accomplish his objectives because he arrived always before the enemy could get reinforced. Despite the fact that his plan had to be adapted because of the lack of support from Cuba, audacity was key in Gálvez's campaign, and it allowed the Spanish General to achieve surprise, gather additional intelligence, and impact the morale of both the friendly and enemy troops.

During the Mississippi River operation, Don Bernardo de Gálvez attacked Dickson even before he knew the war had been declared. But the key to success was not only the rapid execution, but all the preparation done one year in advance since Gálvez arrived to Louisiana. The previous preparation of the campaign, the ability to operate inside the enemy's decision cycle and rapid execution allowed the attacker to surprise the enemy and enjoy an important advantage.<sup>142</sup>

Moreover, the campaign demonstrates that the application of audacity provided some unexpected benefits, like intelligence collection and positive effects on the morale of the troops. As we related during the historical narrative, during the Mississippi River

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<sup>141</sup> "Audacity means boldly executing a simple plan of action. Commanders display audacity by developing bold, inventive plans that produce decisive results. Commanders demonstrate audacity by violently applying combat power." Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-90, *Offense and Defense* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2012), 3-1.

<sup>142</sup> "The decision cycle as the commander and staff process to determine required actions. It consists of four phases: monitor, assess, plan and act." Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-33, *Joint Task Force Headquarters* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2012), IV-16.



operation, Gálvez's forces captured some enemy letters with the British intentions which were a relevant source of intelligence. Additionally, General Gálvez always tried to exploit success at the operational level because morale is a powerful combat power multiplier which impacts both the friendly and the enemy forces. It was after the first major operation when Don Bernardo de Gálvez stated he wanted to 'play the dice and try luck', which entailed assuming some risks. Later, after the siege of Mobile, he wanted again to exploit success because his unit's morale was great while the British were fatigued after the hard march that made them arrive late. As it has been described during the historical narrative, in that situation, he lacked the support of the chain of command to exploit and continue to Pensacola. But now, we could argue that it could have been a success. The last concept to review is adaptation, which has in many cases proved to be key to determine the military resolution of conflicts.

### Adaptation

Don Bernardo de Gálvez was an experienced, agile and adaptive leader who performed very well adapting to the characteristics of the operational environment and to the enemy situation. We can gain some insights from his campaign on how to adapt forces to the operational environment and how to take advantage of this adaptation.

On the one hand, General Gálvez succeeded in adapting to the operational environment. During the campaign, he proved that in certain occasions, it is better to consider and accept some of the limitations imposed by the operational environment, rather than trying to continue as initially planned. Thus, as it was described in the historical narrative, the Spanish general had to postpone the first expedition to Pensacola because of the risks of executing the movement from Mobile to Pensacola by land while

entering the summer season because is very dangerous because of the spread of diseases in the area. Another example of proper adaptation was the fact that the Spanish troops moved by boat whenever was possible. On the contrary, the British moved mainly on land, which left their troops ineffective quite often.

Another relevant lesson from Don Bernardo de Gálvez's experiences was his adaptation to an irregular enemy. When an enemy is effective and his actions impact on the friendly forces, it is important to study his techniques and take actions adapted to the enemy to deny his effectiveness. In the case of the Indians, the clearance of the forest and the works of hasty fortification were key measures to protect the friendly forces. Later, the application of procedures adapted to the enemy techniques, enabled General Gálvez to counter the Indians with efficiency.

But we can extract the most relevant lesson related to the concept of adaptation from the episodes of hurricanes during the campaign. When a natural disaster or cataclysmic event affects both the enemy and the friendly forces, the one who better adapts or recovers faster has a clear advantage on the adversary. Don Bernardo de Gálvez was an experienced, astute and aggressive leader and this idea led to his concept of operations whenever there was a hurricane. However, he was not blind and did not persist on this idea regardless of the context. Thus, during the Mississippi River operation, his forces recovered soon from the hurricane and were able to surprise the British forces stationed along the river. On the contrary, during the second failed expedition to Pensacola, he decided not to continue because of the refusal of the naval authorities to offer support. The decision was the good one, because obviously, we can estimate that

the effects of the hurricane on the fleet were much more devastating than those on the enemy forts.

### Recommendations for Application in Future Campaigns

Despite the obvious differences between today's operations and Gálvez's campaign to recover West Florida conducted more than 200 years ago, there are some similarities with conditions that exist in current conflicts. Currently, forces usually fight as part of coalitions at the joint level where the exercise of mission command is challenging. They need to perform in complex operational environments, and to achieve their objectives through decisive actions, applying audacity to surprise the enemy and win decisively. Some of the lessons described above are fully applicable in today's conflicts. As a final synthesis, I will discuss some recommendations for future military operations based on my research.

### Foster Audacious Leaders and support their Audacity during Operations

History and present day operations demonstrate that leadership is the cornerstone for a successful army and its development must be a priority. Despite the technological advances, success in operations is usually determined by the existence of audacious leaders able to understand the situation and visualize a suitable, acceptable and feasible approach, and the means required to support it.

Audacity provides a significant advantage in military operations. Generally, it enables the seizure of the initiative and facilitates the employment of surprise in operations. Gálvez's campaign proves how decisive was his audacity both at the

operational and at the tactical level. Military leaders must be educated and trained to be audacious and aggressive, keeping an offensive attitude not only at the tactical, but also, at the operational level. For this purpose, professional military education is key to develop this attitude in leaders. But the entire organization must also be supportive of this concept. Currently, especially at the operational level, the military element is not the only one that must be considered in operations. For this reason, the entire system of national power including all the elements of unified action must support and contribute in order to execute operations with audacity.<sup>143</sup>

The efficiency of the organization supporting the leaders planning or conducting the operations is key to solve any issue and overcome the challenges during the fight. The attitude from all those not involved directly in the fight must be totally supportive in order to foster the mission command philosophy and enable the leaders to be agile and adaptive. Military organizations have been traditionally rigid but the application of mission command philosophy demands that the whole organization must adapt to it. This adaptation effort is especially demanding at the strategic and operational levels, where some authorities, commanders and staffs, despite of not being directly leading or conducting the fight, need to listen, understand and support the leaders in the lower levels to enable them to take decisions at their level, execute disciplined initiative, and be agile and adaptive. For this reason, in complex situations and operational environments, the

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<sup>143</sup> JP 3-0 identifies in Figure I-4 the next elements for the United States' unified action: US Joint forces, us government departments and agencies, multinational forces, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and private sector and others. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 2011).

authorities not conducting the operations, but with responsibility over the forces, need to show an especially supportive attitude.

### Adapt the Leader's Preparation to the Requirements of the Operational Environment

This recommendation is linked to the first one, because empowering leaders implies providing them a better preparation to assume higher responsibilities. Currently, the conflicts' operational environment is challenging and having adaptive leaders with just a generic preparation is not enough to overcome all the challenges. Having mission-tailored forces and leaders prepared specifically for the operational environment supposes a clear advantage to succeed in operations.

Present conflicts demand generic knowledge from the leaders in both tactical and technical skills to be audacious and seize, retain and exploit the initiative to achieve objectives through decisive action. But effective conflict resolution also requires from the leaders some specific knowledge related to the conflict's operational environment. The specific preparation on culture, languages, society and political organization, as well as the acquisition of social skills to interact and influence the human dimension are critical to successful military operations. With reference to the recent conflicts, the opinion that there is a lack of planning and effectiveness in the execution of the stabilization phase is quite accepted, and the adaptation of the leaders' preparation to the operational environment could provide a better approach to alleviate this gap.

Leader development in the armed forces is usually based on three pillars. They are on the job training, institutional training, and self-development. Military institutions should adapt the educational curriculum to foster the adaptation of leaders to the different

operational environments where they will need to operate. Once the institutional pillar makes the first changes, the other pillars will adapt also and leaders will be better prepared to assume and overcome their challenges.

Create a Positive Climate and Open Channels for Open Communication in  
the Chain of Command in order to enable the Application  
of Mission Command Philosophy

Despite the fact that technical advances provide great opportunities for the achievement of effective communications and a shared understanding for commanders, a negative command climate and rigid relations in the chain of command can hinder the application of the mission command philosophy.

The telephone, mail exchange, video teleconference and the use of complex situational awareness systems are technologies that military organizations employ to achieve an effective communication. They are excellent tools for communication, but the key to success in applying effectively the mission command philosophy is to achieve a shared understanding of the situation, as well as the commander's intent and purpose of the operation and its application to solve the conflicts of interests that could appear among the different levels of command. Sometimes, rigid relations in the chain of command hinder the achievement of a shared understanding. This shared understanding belongs to the human dimension's domain, where it is all about human relations.

Leadership is a powerful combat force multiplier, and having well-prepared leaders, harmonizing the relations between them, and taking the necessary measures to enable a positive climate command, at least at the highest levels of the chain of command, would facilitate and enable the achievement of a shared understanding and the most effective application of the mission command philosophy.

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